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OF THE
YEAR 2021

NIDHI SUNIL

MODEL OF THE YEAR

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**MODEL OF THE YEAR:
NIDHI SUNIL**

Defying stereotypes while amplifying inclusivity, the model, activist and all-round outspoken citizen of the world is turning the fashion industry upside down. By Avanti Dalal.
Photographed by Pierre Debusschere
Styled by Priyanka Kapadia

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**MAN OF THE YEAR:
NEERAJ CHOPRA**

A throw transformed this village boy from obscurity into a phenomenon. The javelin star's real victory is in seizing his Olympics win to turn his sport into a focus for India, finds Sharda Ugra.
Photographed by Bikramjit Bose
Styled by Priyanka Kapadia

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**NEWSMAKER OF THE YEAR:
SIRISHA BANDLA**

With one small step, this scientist made a giant leap for womankind. The astronaut opens up to Megha Mahindru about why commercial space travel could be the gateway to a phenomenally inclusive future.
Photographed by Billy Kidd
Styled by Priyanka Kapadia

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UP ALL NIGHT

The dress code said glamorous. And when it looks this good, no one wants the party to end.
Photographed by Rasharn Agyemang
Styled by Kate Phelan

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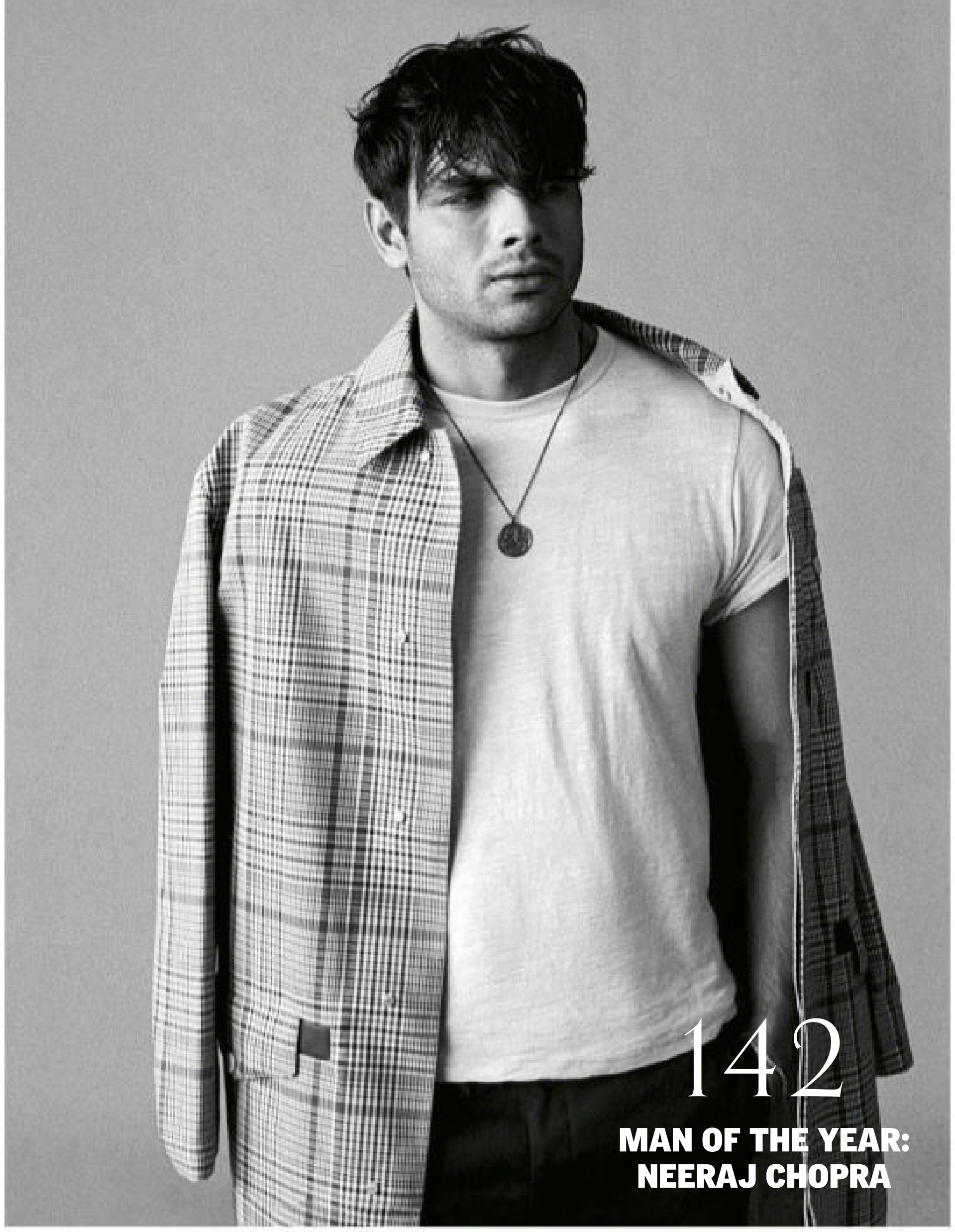

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BIKRAMJIT BOSE

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From a mother's zari-filled sari to found-in-the-attic French lace, brides are turning to heirloom pieces to add extra significance to their wedding attire. By Sujata Assomull

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While the Birkin, Constance and Kelly may be the most well-known, Hermès has 50 different styles that marry form and function with ease. Catherine Fulconis from the luxury maison rounds them up with Priyanka Khanna

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COVER LOOK

On Nidhi Sunil: Bodysuit, **Saint Laurent**. Earrings, **Helene Zubeldia**. *On Neeraj Chopra:* Sweater, trousers; both **Ermenegildo Zegna**. *On Sirisha Bandla:* Paillette embellished mesh turtleneck bodysuit, trousers; both **Burberry**. Hair: Peter Gray (Nidhi); Yianni Tsapatori (Neeraj). Hair and makeup: Lori Pressman (Sirisha). Makeup: Adrien Pinault (Nidhi); Kiran Denzongpa (Neeraj). Photographed by **Pierre Debusschere** (Nidhi); **Bikramjit Bose** (Neeraj); **Billy Kidd** (Sirisha). Styled by **Priyanka Kapadia**

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The celebrity manager and serial investor's repeated success is built on her foresight to predict the next big thing and take a chance on it, writes Hitha Herzog

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The legendary actor, who juggles her roles as a producer, writer, philanthropist, superhero, mother and wife, shares her guide to living life to its full potential. By Priyanka Khanna

174 Fashion entrepreneur of the year: Masaba Gupta
At 33, she helms the House of Masaba and has a hit TV show in its second season, alongside a growing community of nearly two million followers. But her eyes are always on the big picture: expanding her legacy. By Priyanka Khanna

176 Global business icon of the year: Indra Nooyi
She made history when she became the first woman and the first South Asian to become the CEO of PepsiCo. But what comes next? A mission to change the future of work, discovers Shahnaz Siganporia

178 Agent of change: Alia Bhatt
Unperturbed by naysayers, the Bollywood star has always blazed her own path. Now, she carries the same approach to her relief initiatives, finds Sadaf Shaikh

180 Agent of change: Faye D'Souza
For this award-winning journalist, her focus remains sharing the truth in a virtual sea of unreliable news, says Sadaf Shaikh

182 Performer of the year: Shefali Shah
Late bloomer or living legend, whichever way you look at it, this 48-year-old actor is bent on pushing the expiration date in an industry that equates success with precocity, says Udita Jhunjhunwala

184 Tech leader of the year: Sharmistha Dubey
How did a Jamshedpur-bred engineer seize the pandemic to upend Silicon Valley and reinvent the online dating game into a multibillion-dollar empire? Parizaad Khan Sethi finds out

188 Spotlight of the year: Gitanjali Rao
Counting Angelina Jolie and Malala Yousafzai among her role models, this 15-year-old inventor and coder is bent on breaking stereotypes in STEM, says Akanksha Kamath

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The most extraordinary stories come from the unlikeliest corners. And that's where this award-winning filmmaker found her gender-rights heroes, finds Almas Khateeb

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In 2017, this British-Indian teen campaigned for equal education in the UK. Today, she's inspiring young people everywhere to make activism a daily deed. By Akanksha Kamath

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Just as she refuses to be defined by her leitmotif of bindis, her wildly inventive art too defies singular interpretation. Anindita Ghose speaks to the legendary Indian artist and learns how she's having quite the year of firsts

196 Lifetime achievement award: Jane Goodall
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202 After nearly two years of staying at home, we're craving an old-fashioned night out. And Chanel's haute new multihued mini bucket bag, which promises to hold everything you need from dusk till dawn, is giving us the feels

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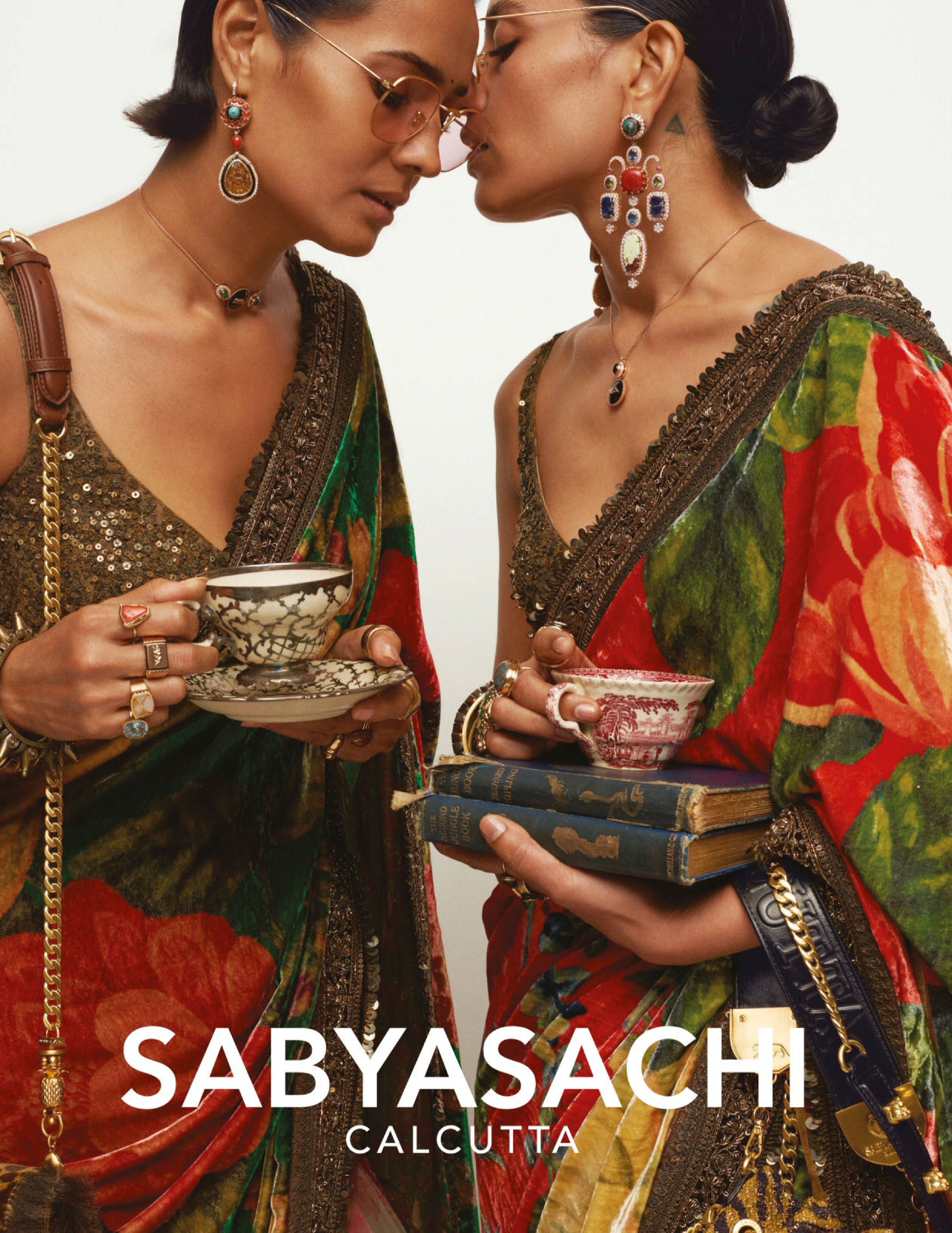
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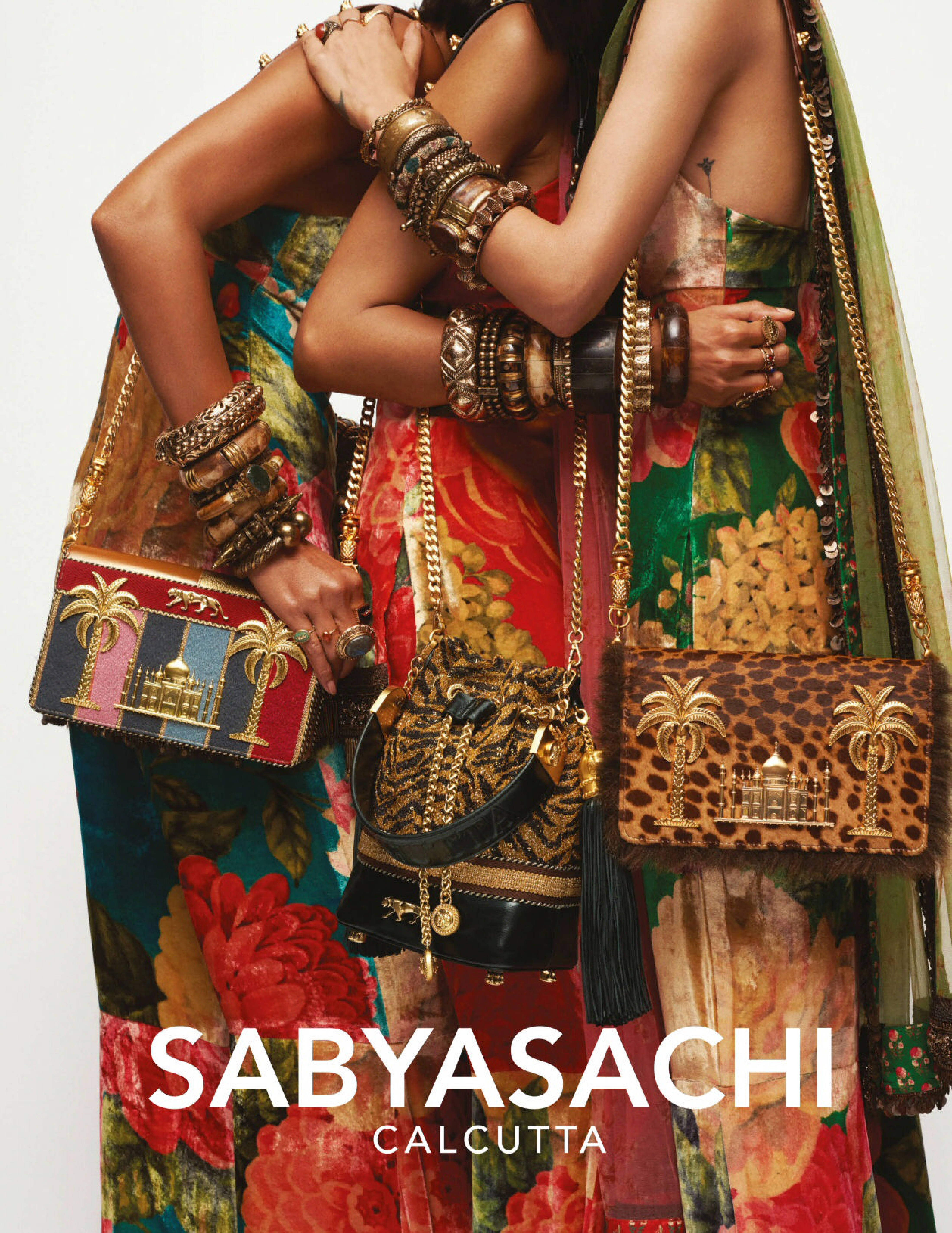
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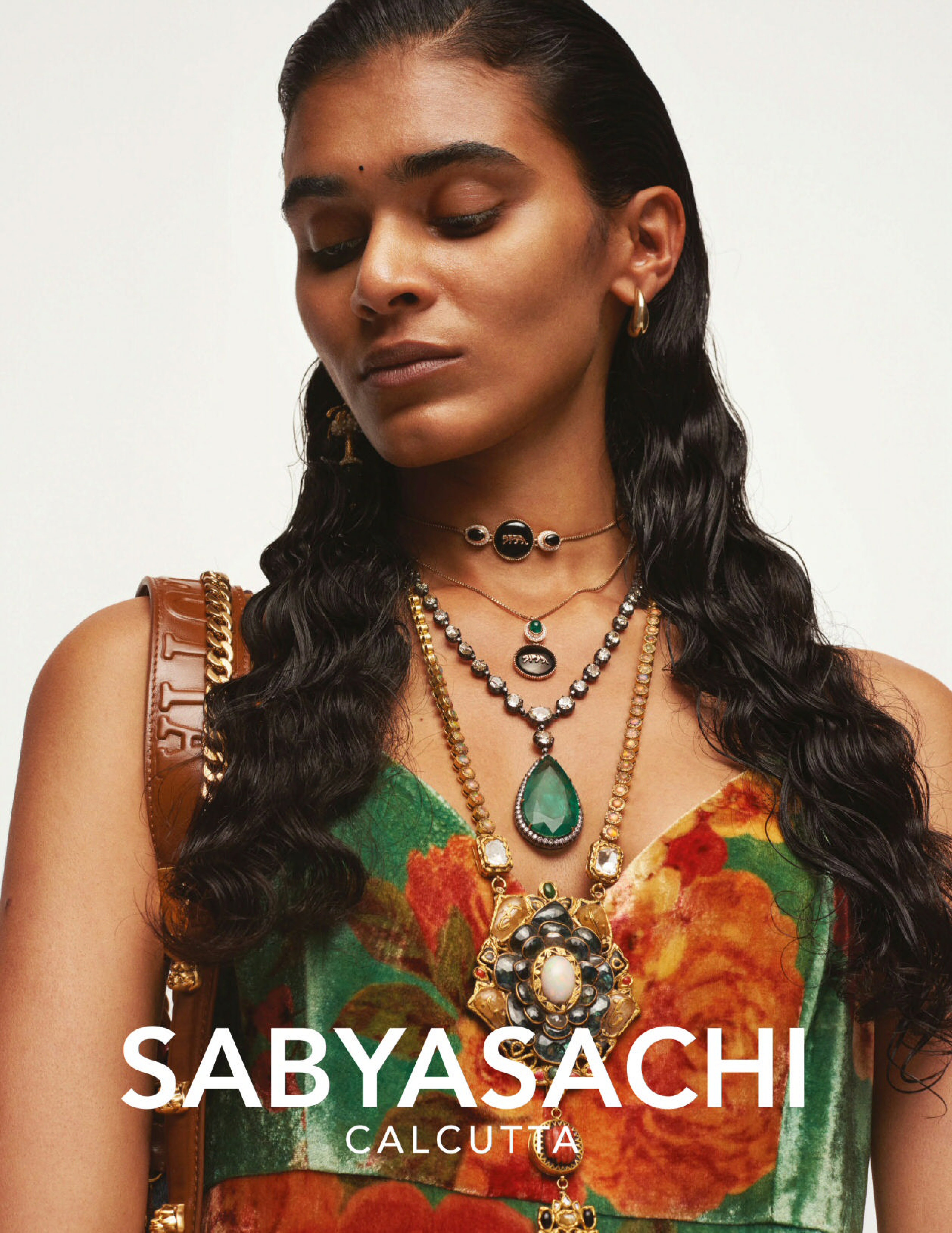
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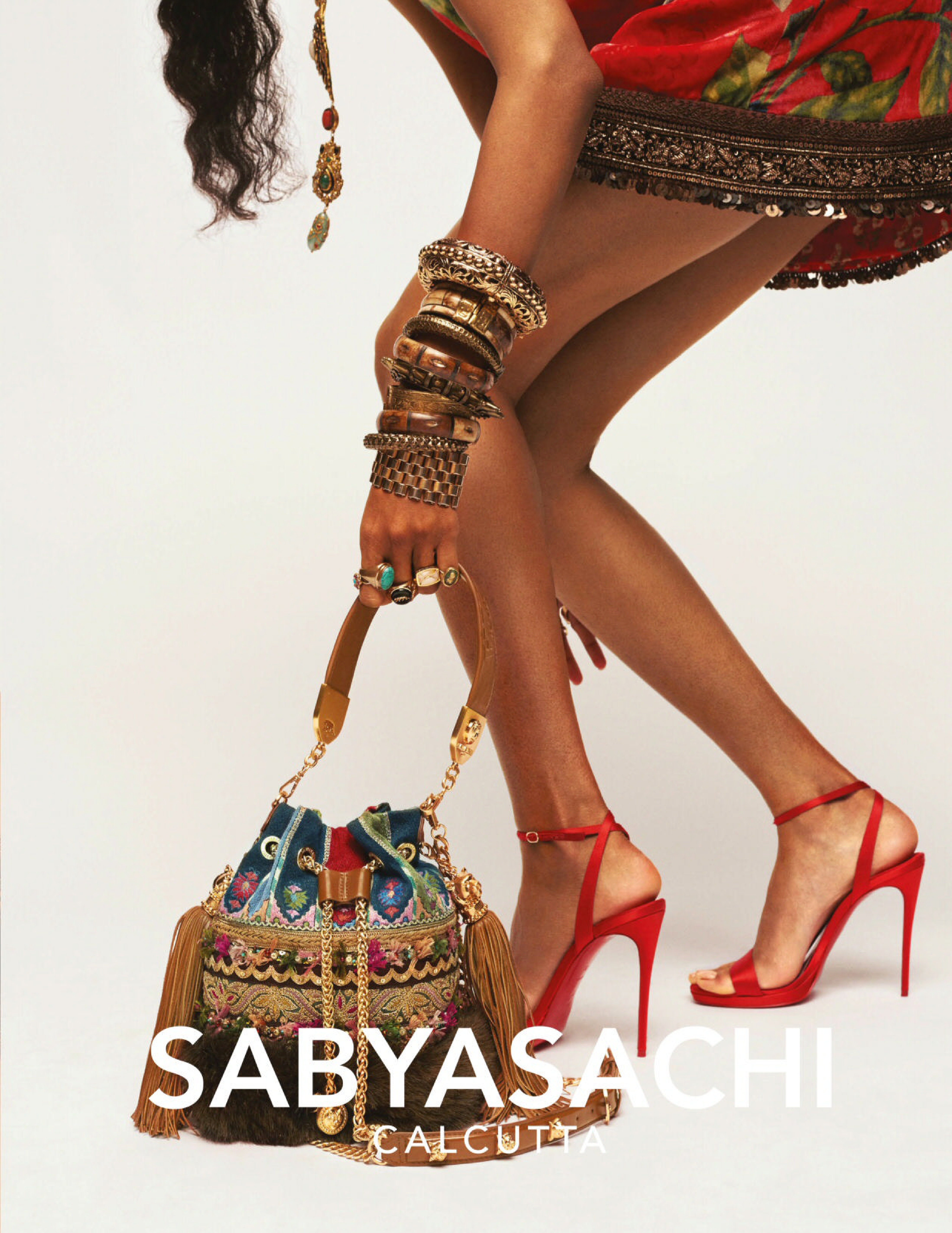
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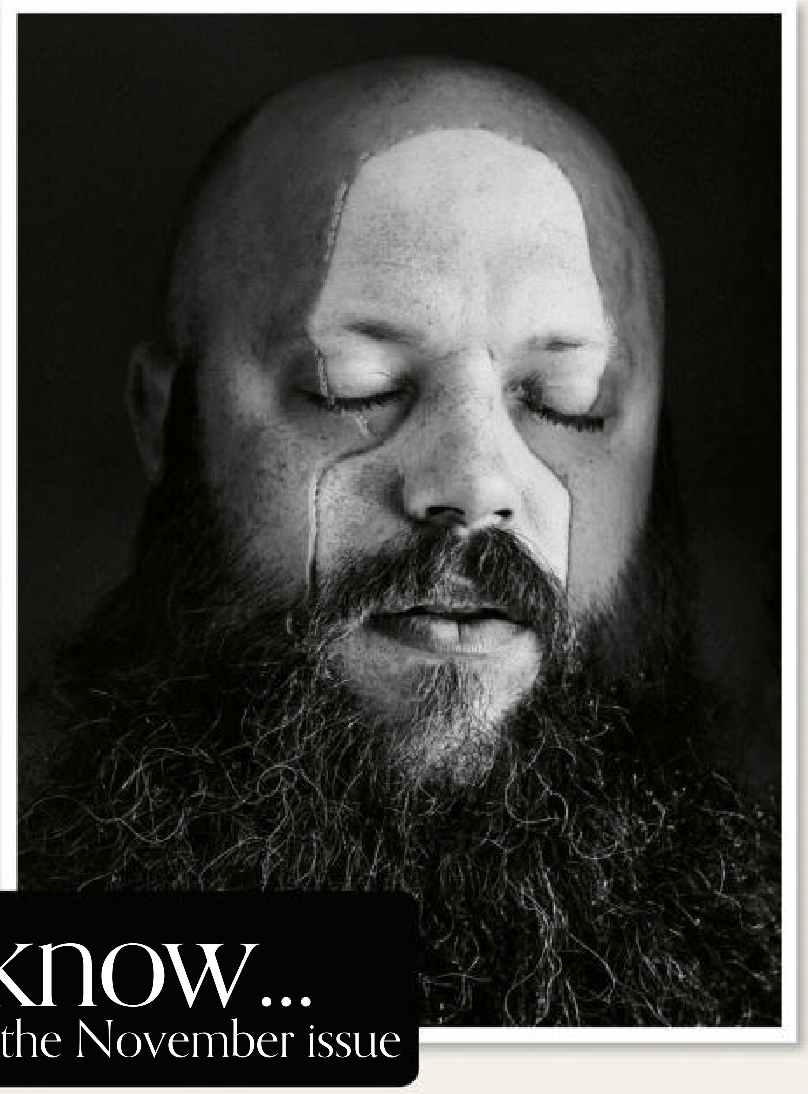

BILLY KIDD
The Brooklyn-based fashion photographer has mastered the ability to draw out the best features in his subjects, some of whom include George Bush Jr, Brooke Shields and George Clooney. This issue, he trains his lens on Sirisha Bandla, the trailblazing India-born aeronautical engineer who travelled to space in July. *Page 148*

PIERRE DEBUSSCHERE
The Belgian visual artist's works have been featured in publications such as *Vogue* Italia, *Dazed* and *Atmos*. Besides having labels like Dior, Chanel and Louis Vuitton on his client roster, he has also created music videos for Beyoncé and Alicia Keys. For this issue, he photographs our cover star, the model-activist Nidhi Sunil. *Page 132*

ANINDITA GHOSE
Mumbai-based Ghose was the editor of *Mint Lounge* and a former *Vogue* India staffer before launching her bestselling novel, *The Illuminated*, earlier this year. In this issue she speaks to artist Bharti Kher, who sheds light on her curiously productive year. *Page 192*

SHARDA UGRA
The senior sports journalist, who has also worked with cricketers John Wright and Yuvraj Singh on their memoirs, interviews Olympic gold winner and *Vogue* India cover star Neeraj Chopra in this issue. *Page 142*

IMRAN KHATRI
Since establishing his eponymous production house 13 years ago, creative producer Khatri has worked with some of the biggest ad agencies, brands, magazines and creative talent in India and abroad. In this issue, he works with sports star Neeraj Chopra, who won India's first-ever track and field gold at the Olympics. *Page 142*

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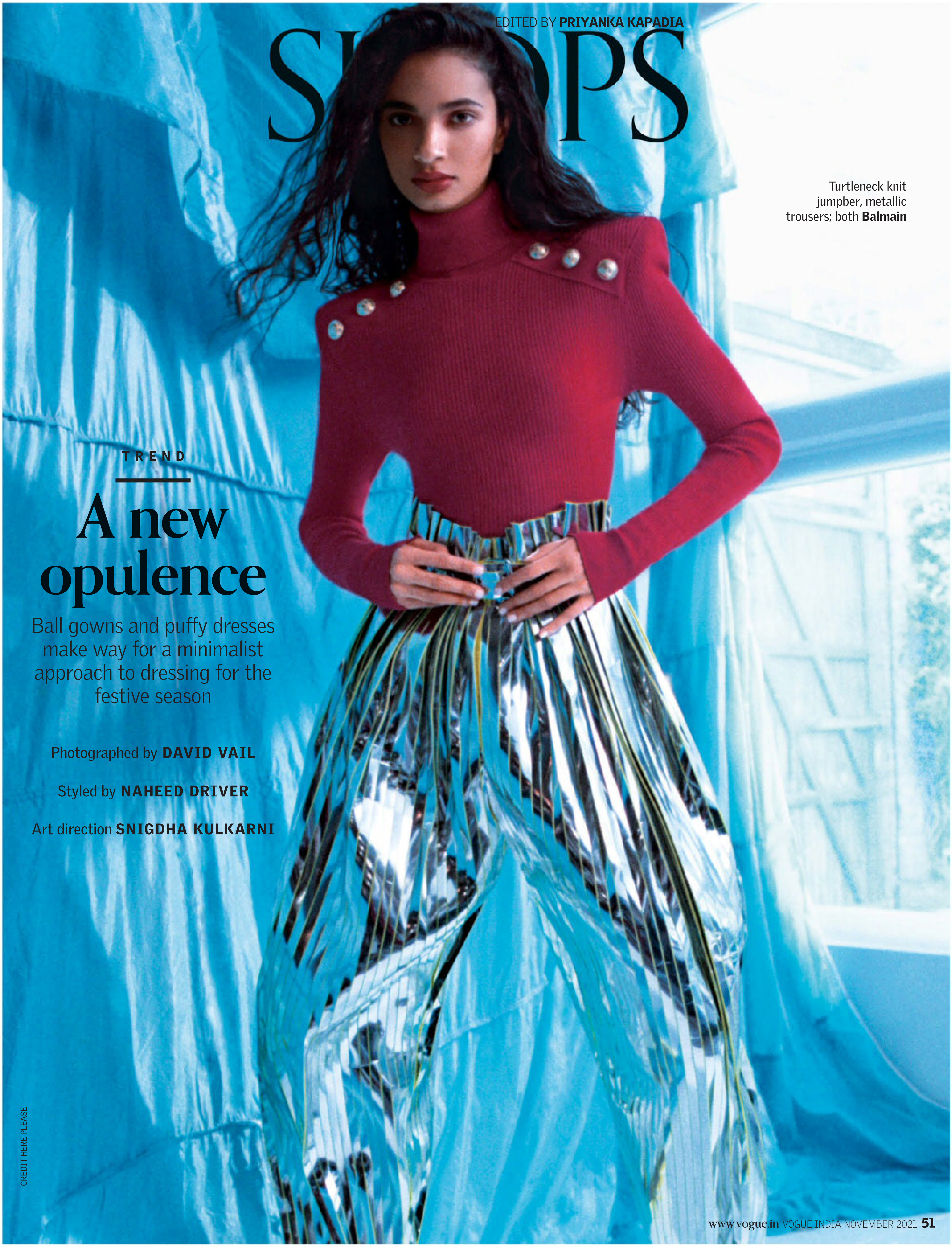

Turtleneck knit jumpber, metallic trousers; both **Balmain**

TREND

A new opulence

Ball gowns and puffy dresses make way for a minimalist approach to dressing for the festive season

Photographed by **DAVID VAIL**

Styled by **NAHEED DRIVER**

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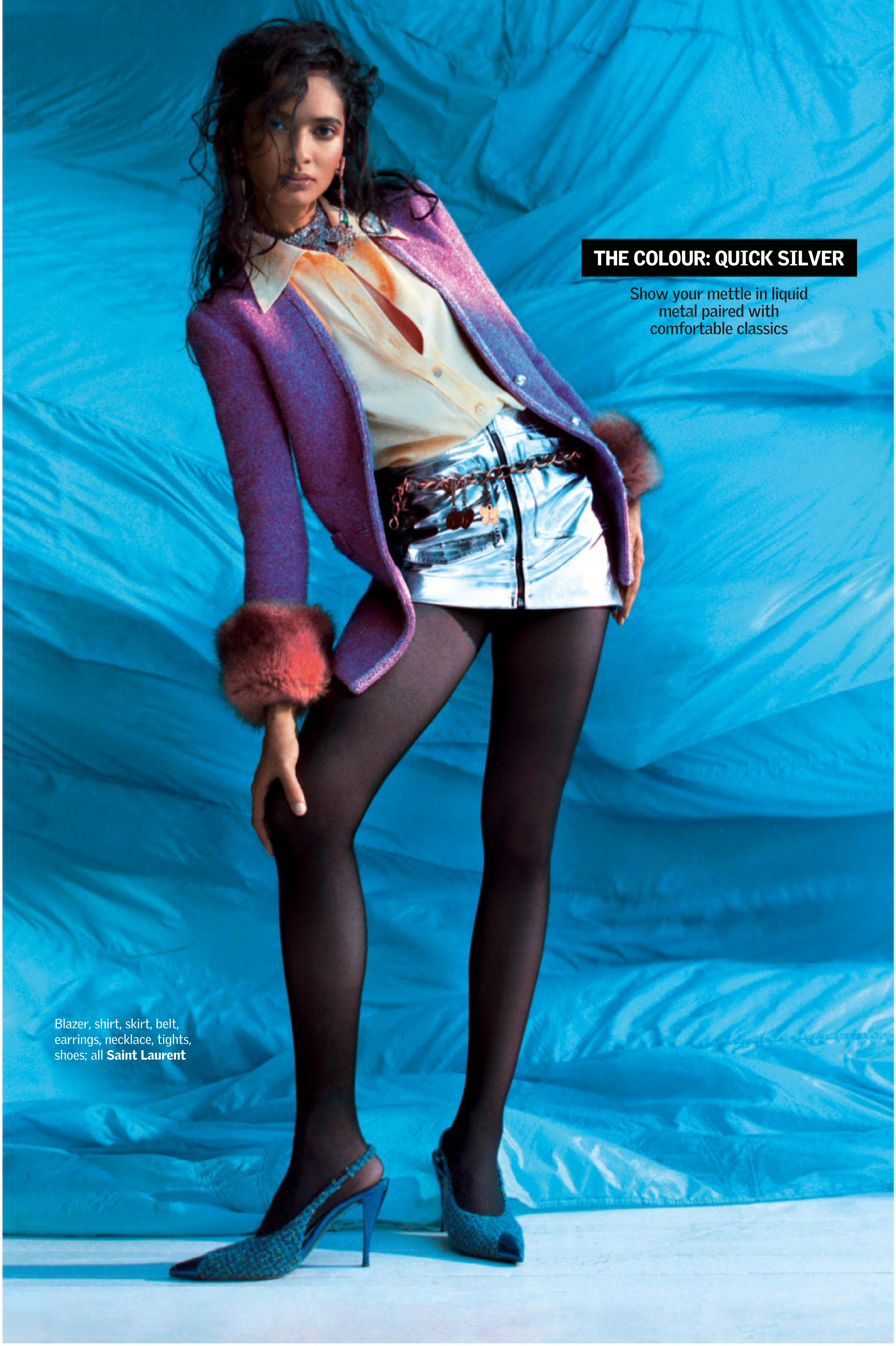


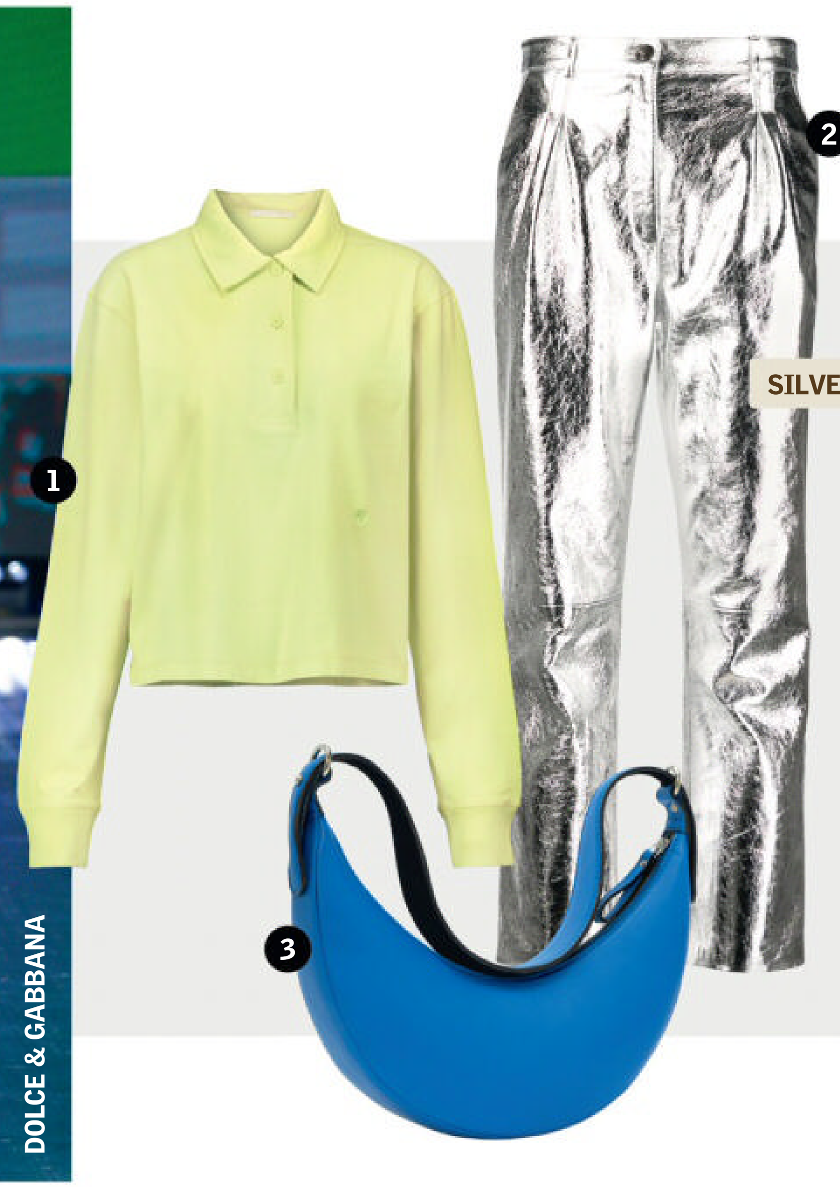
THE COLOUR: QUICK SILVER

Show your mettle in liquid metal paired with comfortable classics

Blazer, shirt, skirt, belt, earrings, necklace, tights, shoes; all **Saint Laurent**

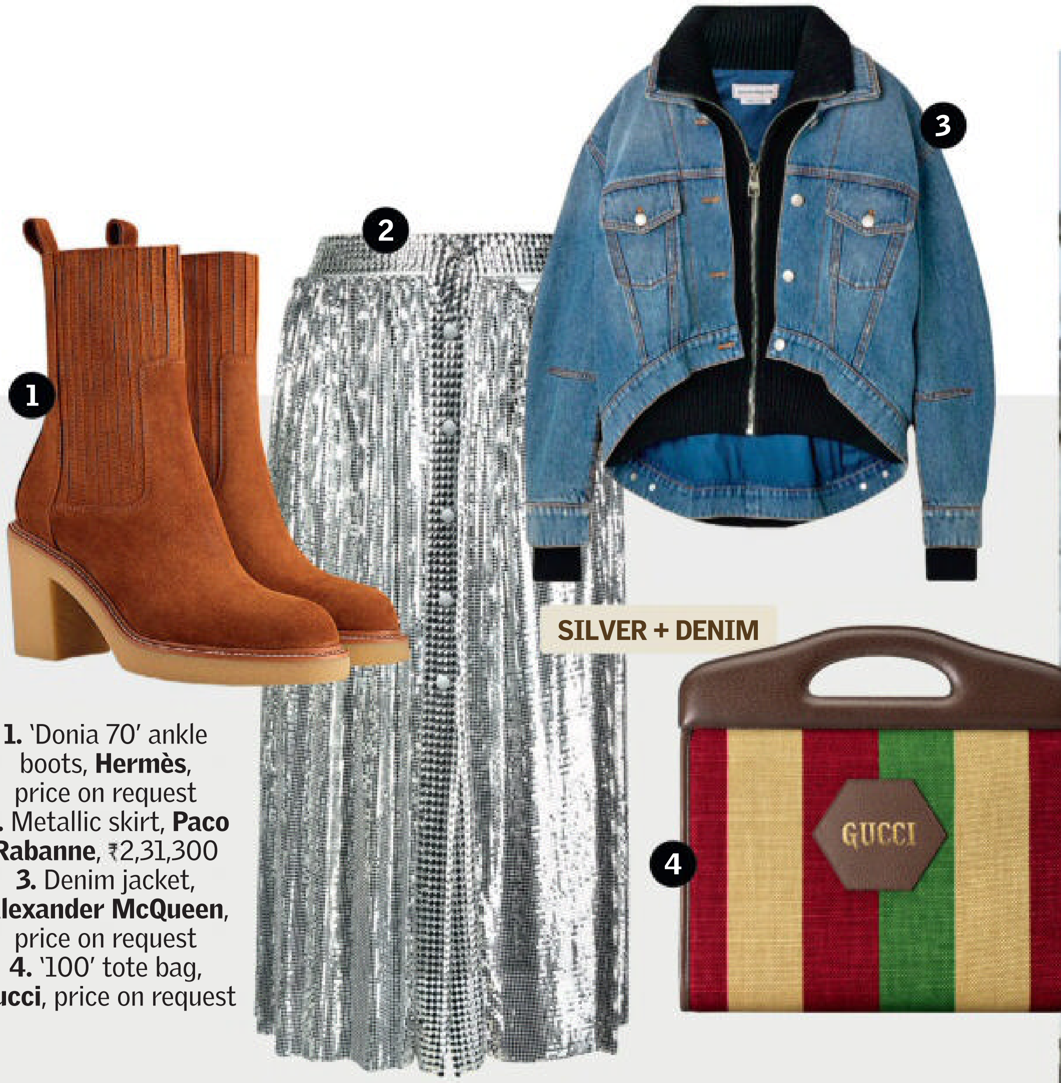
INDIGITAL MEDIA

DOLCE & GABBANA



SILVER + POLO TEE

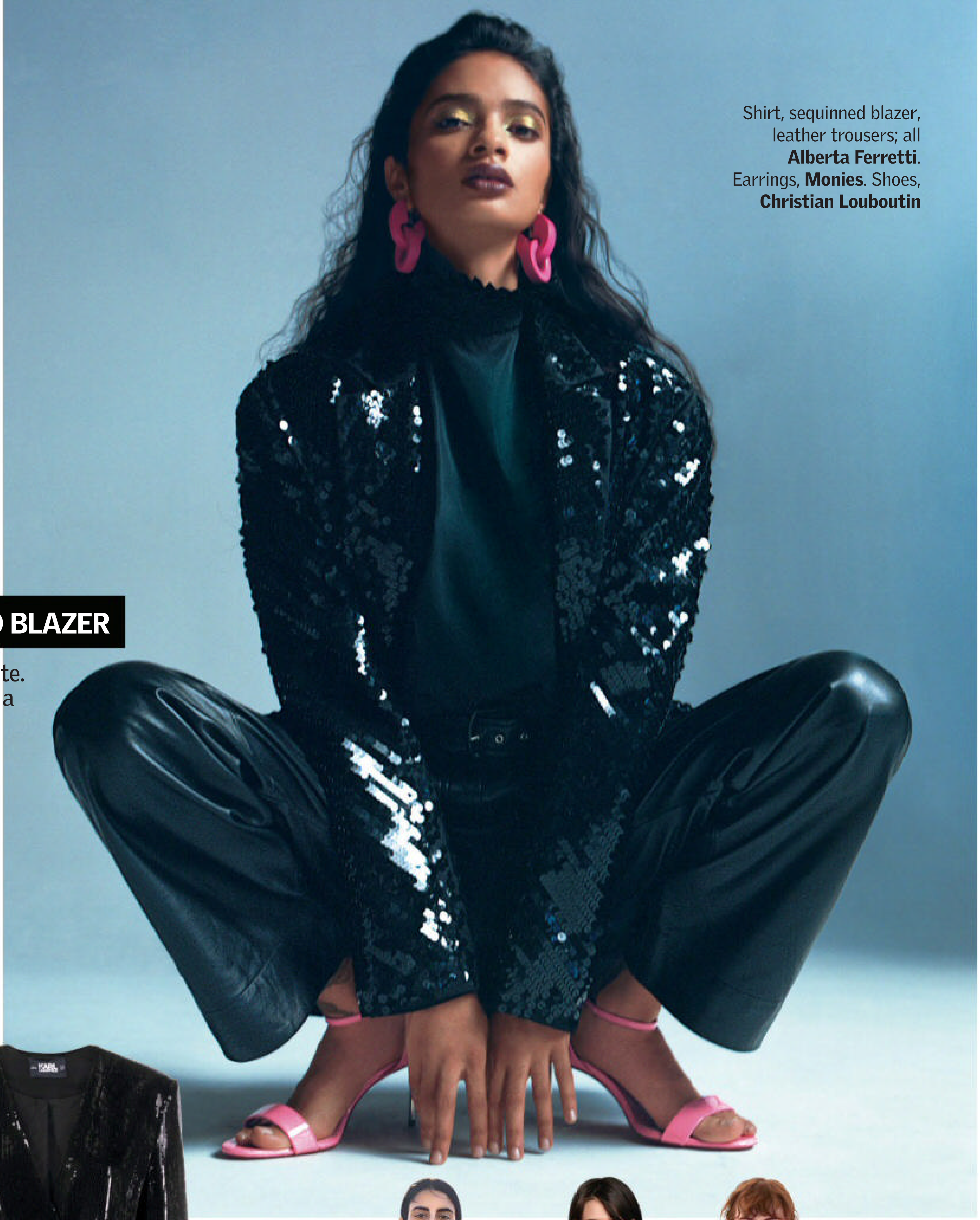
1. Polo neck top, **Helmut Lang**, ₹12,750
2. Metallic trousers, **Etro**, ₹1,72,900
3. 'Selena' moon bag, **Mistry**, ₹6,350



SILVER + DENIM

1. 'Donia 70' ankle boots, **Hermès**, price on request
2. Metallic skirt, **Paco Rabanne**, ₹2,31,300
3. Denim jacket, **Alexander McQueen**, price on request
4. '100' tote bag, **Gucci**, price on request

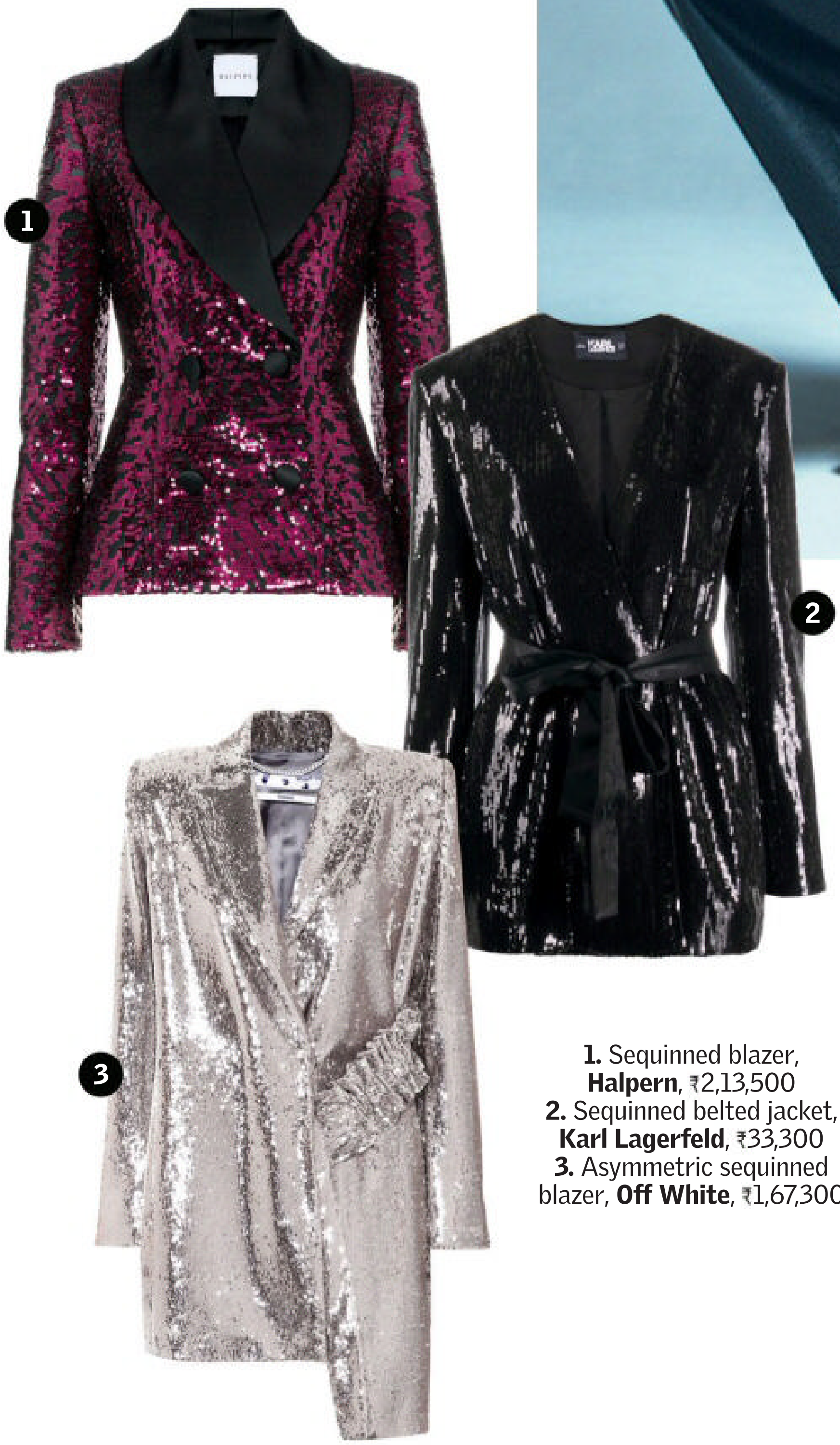
CELINE



Shirt, sequinned blazer, leather trousers; all **Alberta Ferretti**. Earrings, **Monies**. Shoes, **Christian Louboutin**

THE SILHOUETTE: SEQUINNED BLAZER

Give tailoring a sparkling update. Wear the shining jacket with a head-to-toe sequinned suit



1. Sequinned blazer, **Halpern**, ₹2,13,500
2. Sequinned belted jacket, **Karl Lagerfeld**, ₹33,300
3. Asymmetric sequinned blazer, **Off White**, ₹1,67,300

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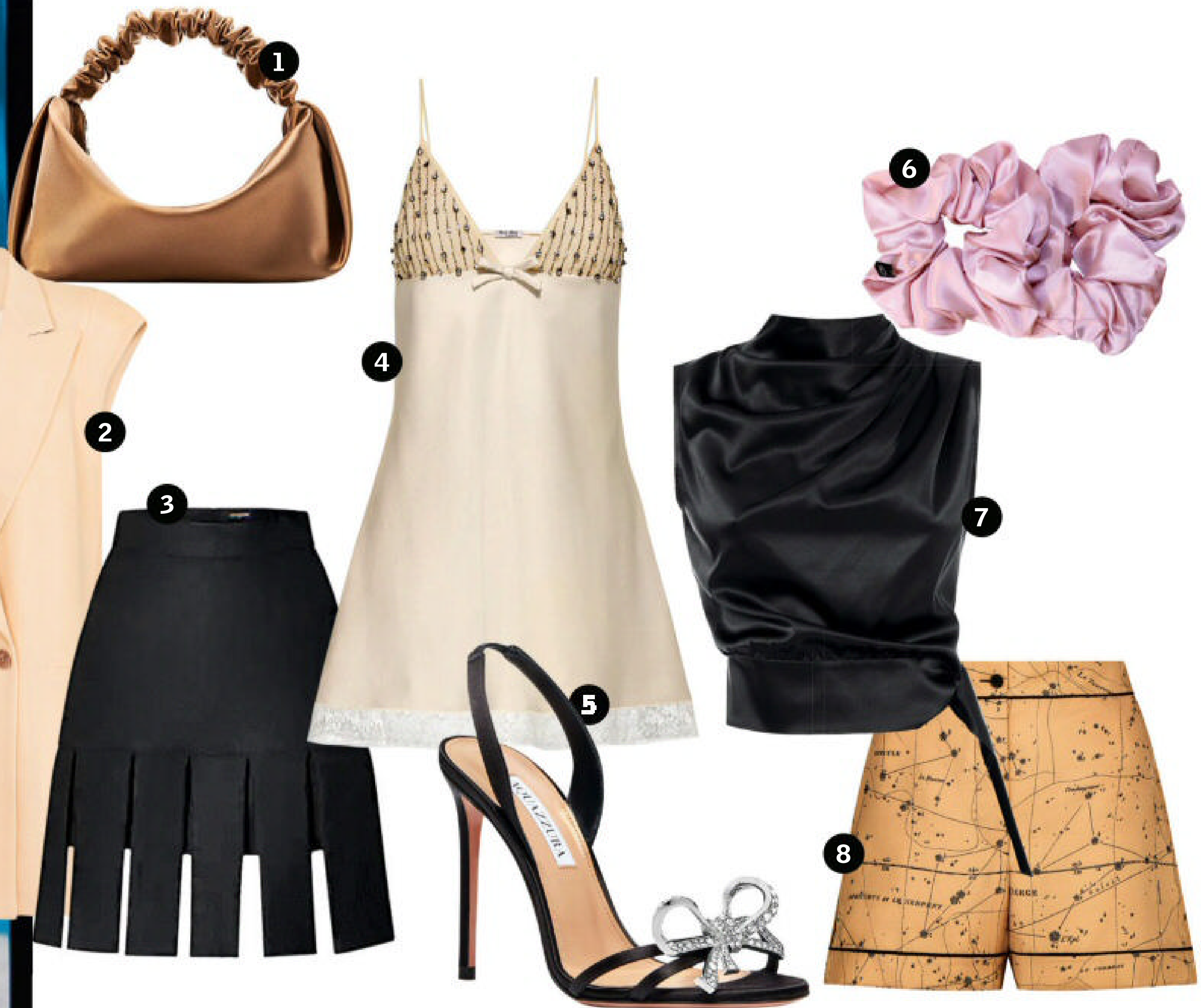
THE MATERIAL: SILK

No longer relegated to the bedroom, silk and satin get a going-out update

Shirt, trousers, belt; all **Fendi**. Earrings, **Monies**


1
2
PETAR PETROV
3
4
5
AQUAZZURA
6
7
8

ERMANNO SCERVINO
CHLOE
ROKSANDA
BALENCIAGA

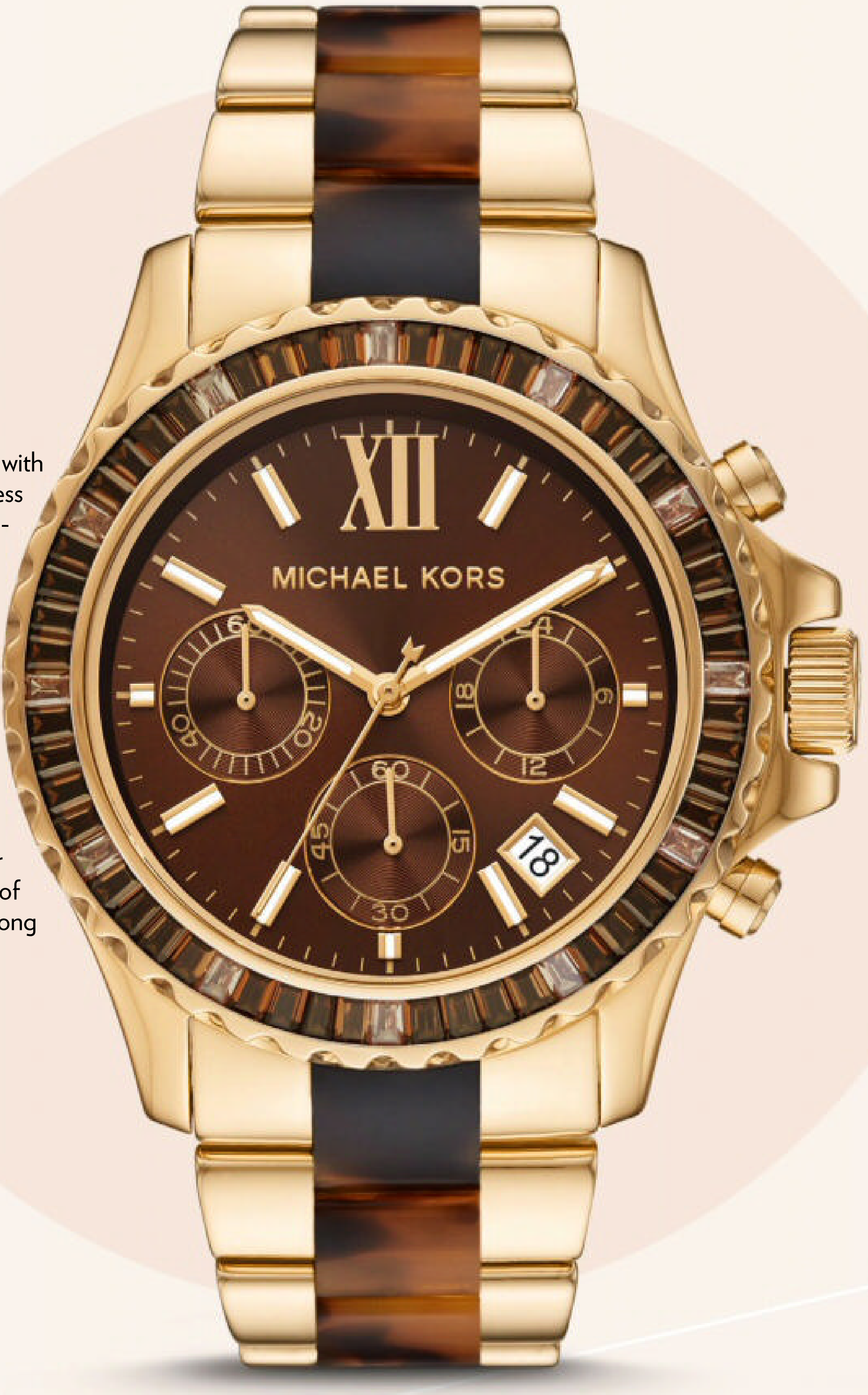
1. 'Satin Scrunchie Bag', **Alexander Wang**, ₹33,000 **2.** Sleeveless blazer, **Petar Petrov**, ₹91,500 **3.** Skirt, **Louis Vuitton**, price on request **4.** Embellished dress, **Miu Miu**, price on request **5.** 'Babe 105' sandals, **Aquazzura**, ₹84,000 **6.** Silk scrunchie, **Dame Essentials**, ₹1,349 **7.** Draped silk top, **Matériel**, price on request **8.** Constellation shorts, **Dior**, ₹90,000

INDIGITAL MEDIA

Sequinned shirt, **Ashish**.
Sequnined trousers, **Halpern**.
Earrings, **Maria Frering**

THE FINEST HOUR

‘Tis the festive season, and nothing says celebration quite like a lovely gift. Whether it’s for yourself or for your mother, sister, or best friend, Michael Kors’ exclusive new iterations of its iconic Everest wristwatch are sure to add sparkle and shine to all your festivities



The Everest watch with gold-tone stainless steel and tortoise-hued acetate links features a dial with chronograph details and a date window for added functionality. The modern, oversized baguette stones and pavé accents gently reflect light, ensuring your watch is the centre of attention all season long

With the festive season upon us, there is no better time to gift yourself and your loved ones something special and memorable that will stand the test of time. Enter Michael Kors’ dazzling new versions of its iconic timepiece, the Everest. Originally introduced in 2011, the watch became a cult favourite for its design that combines iconic New York style with Michael Kors’ distinctive jet set aesthetic.

Three new Everest recreations feature the original’s beloved, boyfriend-style silhouette, while two contemporary takes showcase an added dose of sparkle. All the latest Everest styles flaunt the original chronograph dial and feature both inverted contrasting pavé bezel and oversized baguette stones. Striking gold-tone stainless steel, tortoise-hued acetate and crystal-covered center links add a polished finish—making each version a covetable piece in your wardrobe.

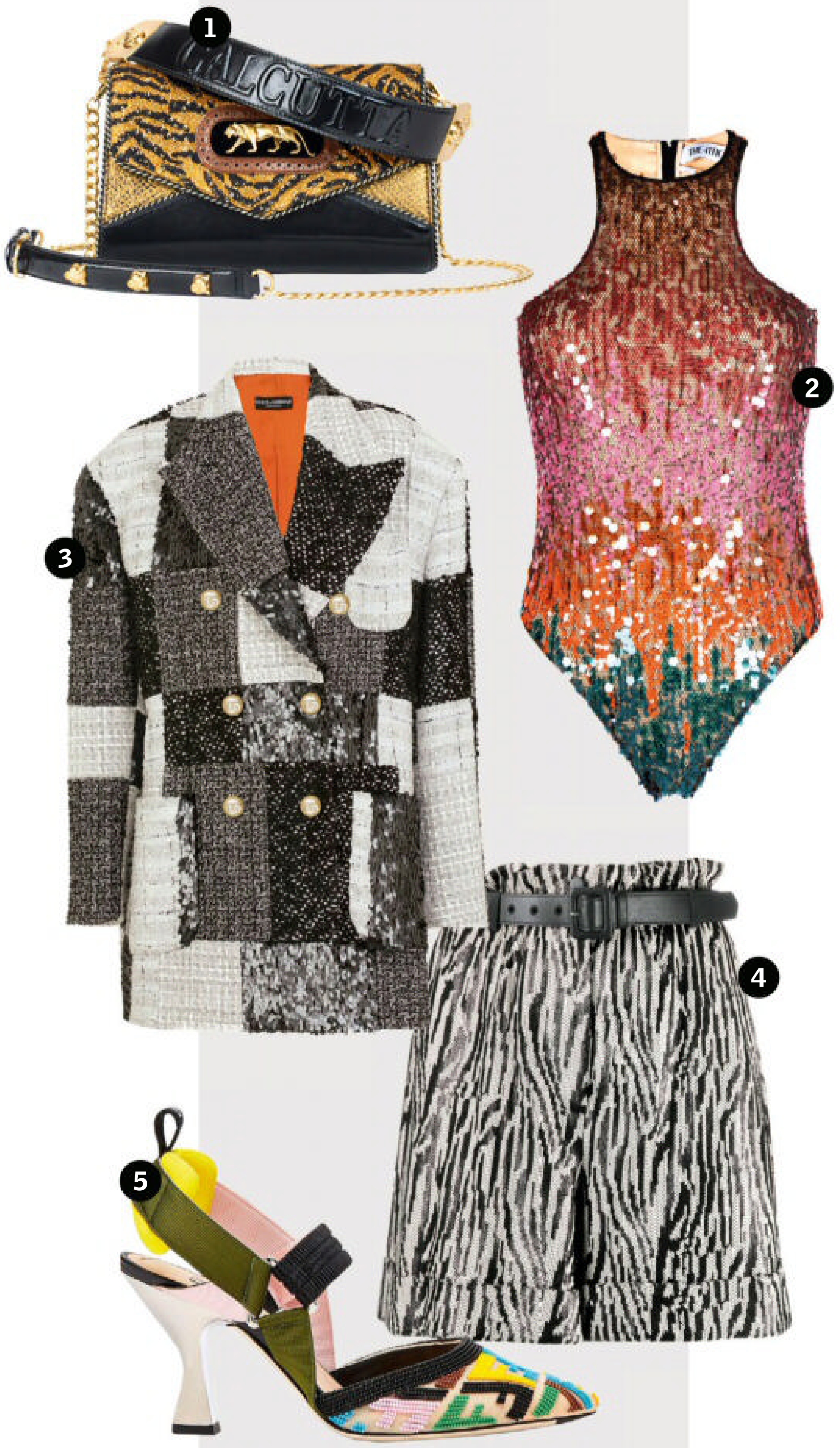
A good timepiece is a smart investment, whether you prefer something classic or want to make a bold statement. Michael Kors’ Everest watch pairs perfectly with any look and is equally stunning with Indian wear like a silk saree, an intricately designed salwar kurta, or a simple traditional outfit. Featuring clean lines and precise detailing, this wristwatch embodies classic glamour with versatile appeal. Worn solo on your wrist or stacked with bracelets, the laid-back yet luxe Everest watch makes for a perfect gift this season.

ETRO
VALENTINO
GIORGIO ARMANI

THE DETAIL: PATTERNED SEQUINS

In kaleidoscopic colourways, sequins come in all prints and patterns for a bold makeover

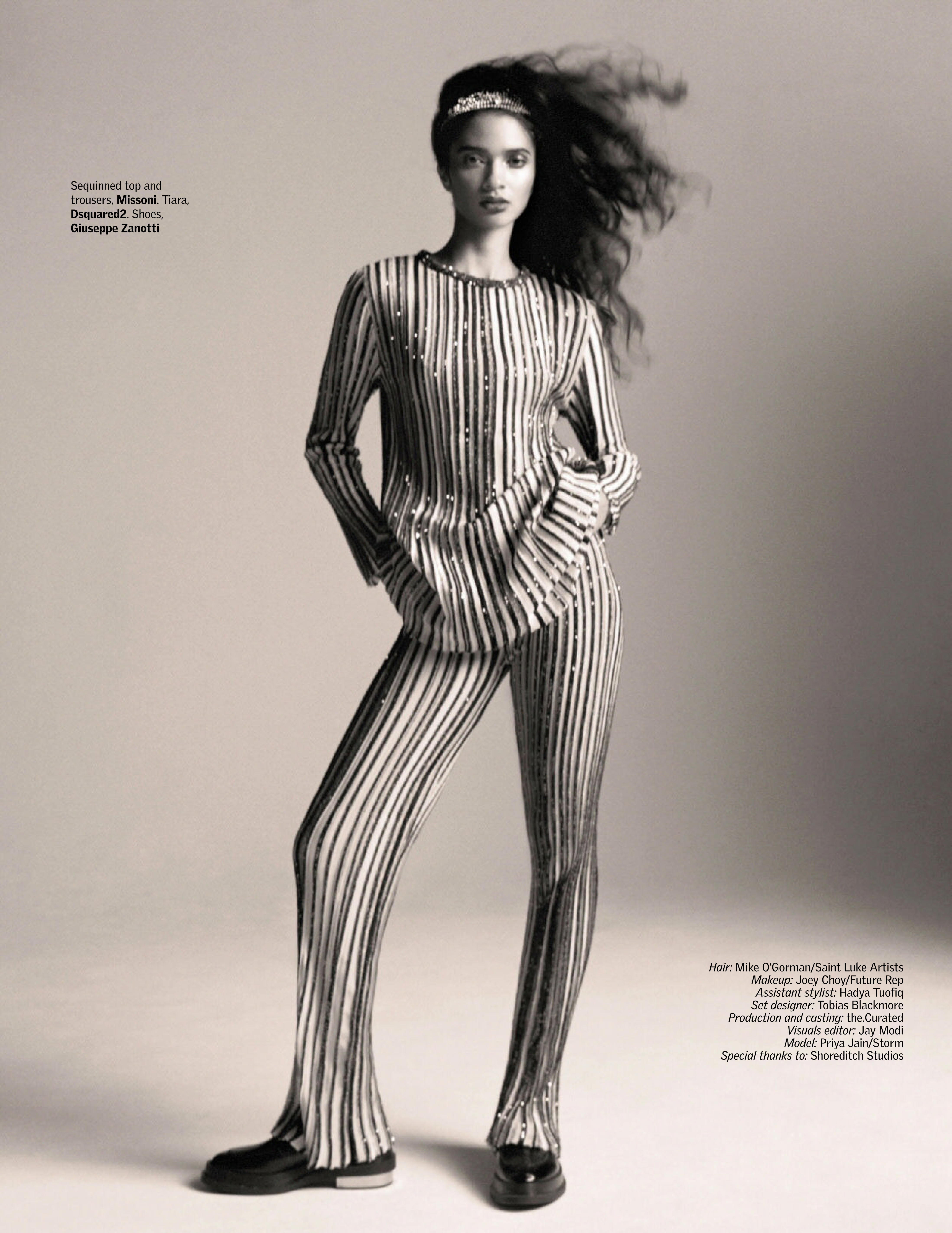
SIDDHARTHA BANSAL
ISABEL MARANT
RAHUL MISHRA



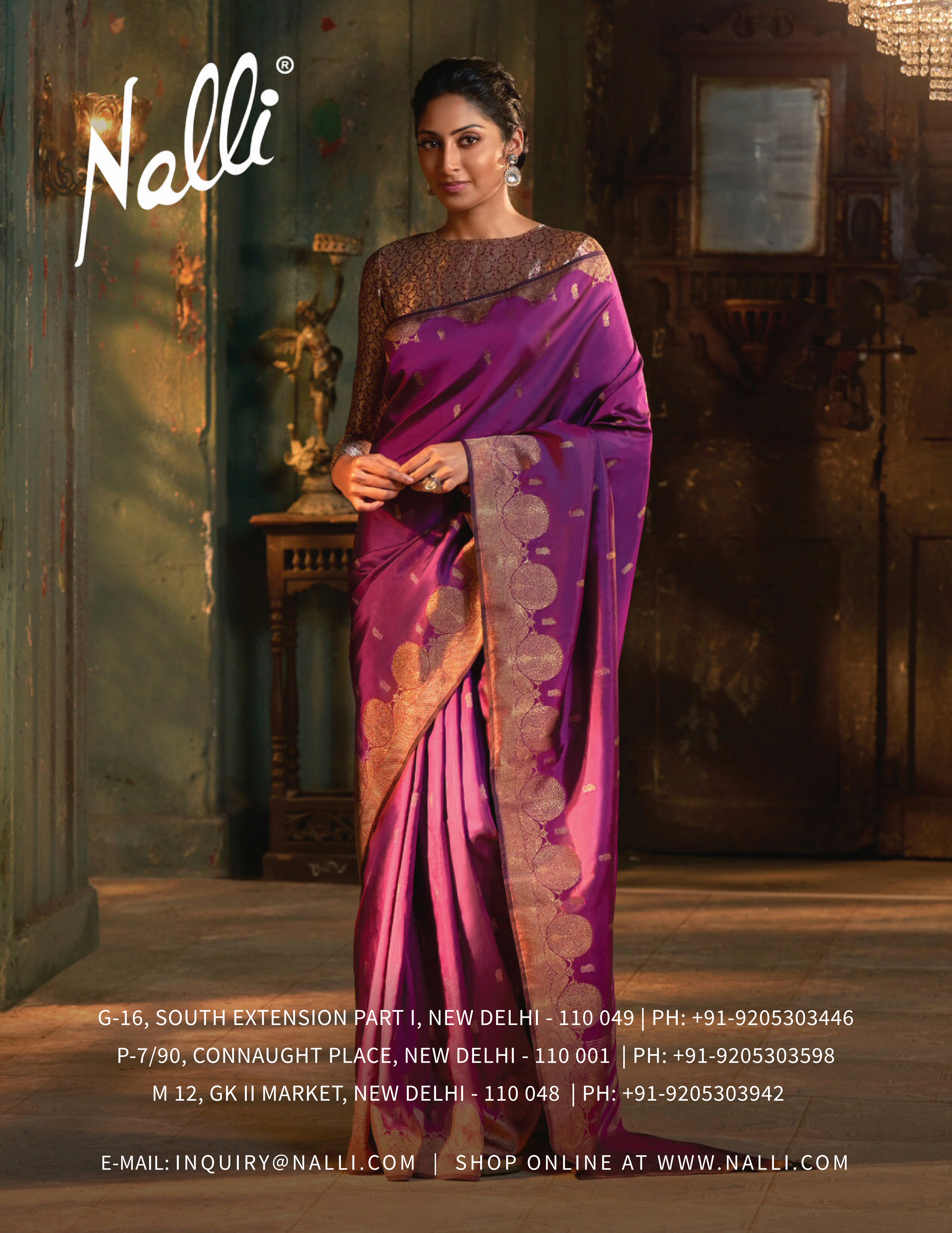
1. 'Calcutta Sling' bag, **Sabyasachi**, price on request **2**. Sequinned bodysuit, **Attico**, ₹1,85,000 **3.** Patchwork blazer, **Dolce & Gabbana**, ₹3,92,400 **4.** Zebra-print shorts, **Self Portrait**, ₹34,900 **5.** Shoes, **Fendi**, price on request

INDIGITAL MEDIA

Sequinned top and trousers, **Missoni**. Tiara, **Dsquared2**. Shoes, **Giuseppe Zanotti**



Hair: Mike O'Gorman/Saint Luke Artists
Makeup: Joey Choy/Future Rep
Assistant stylist: Hadya Tuofiq
Set designer: Tobias Blackmore
Production and casting: the.Curated
Visuals editor: Jay Modi
Model: Priya Jain/Storm
Special thanks to: Shoreditch Studios



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Puff piece

The most beloved of all winter outerwear, the puffer jacket gets quiltier, cooler and cropped

INDIGITAL MEDIA

4
JACQUEMUS

1. Puffer jacket, **Tod's**, price on request
2. Glossy puffer jacket, **Prada**, ₹2,27,000
3. Puffer jacket, **Nanushka**, price on request
4. Cropped padded jacket, **Jacquemus**, ₹99,800

CHANEL
MARNI
MIU MIU

Metallic dress, **Dsquared2**. Puffer jacket, **Michael Kors Collection**. Earrings, **Francesca Villa**. Shoes, **By Far**

THE ATHLETIC ONE

THE CLASSY ONE

THE UNCONVENTIONAL ONE

Split time

Your vibe attracts your tribe, so let your watch be the best way to describe you. By **Rishna Shah**

1. 'TYPE XXI 3815' watch, **Breguet 2.** 'Pilot's Automatic Laureus Sport for Good Edition' watch, **IWC Schaffhausen 3.** 'Oyster Perpetual Explorer II' watch, **Rolex 4.** 'Royal Oak 15202 Jumbo Only' watch, **Audemars Piguet 5.** 'Iconic Link' watch, **Daniel Wellington 6.** 'Ballon Bleu de Cartier' watch, **Cartier 7.** 'Code Coco Electro' watch, **Chanel 8.** 'True Square Over the Abyss Thukral & Tagra' watch, **Rado 9.** 'Grip' watch, **Gucci**

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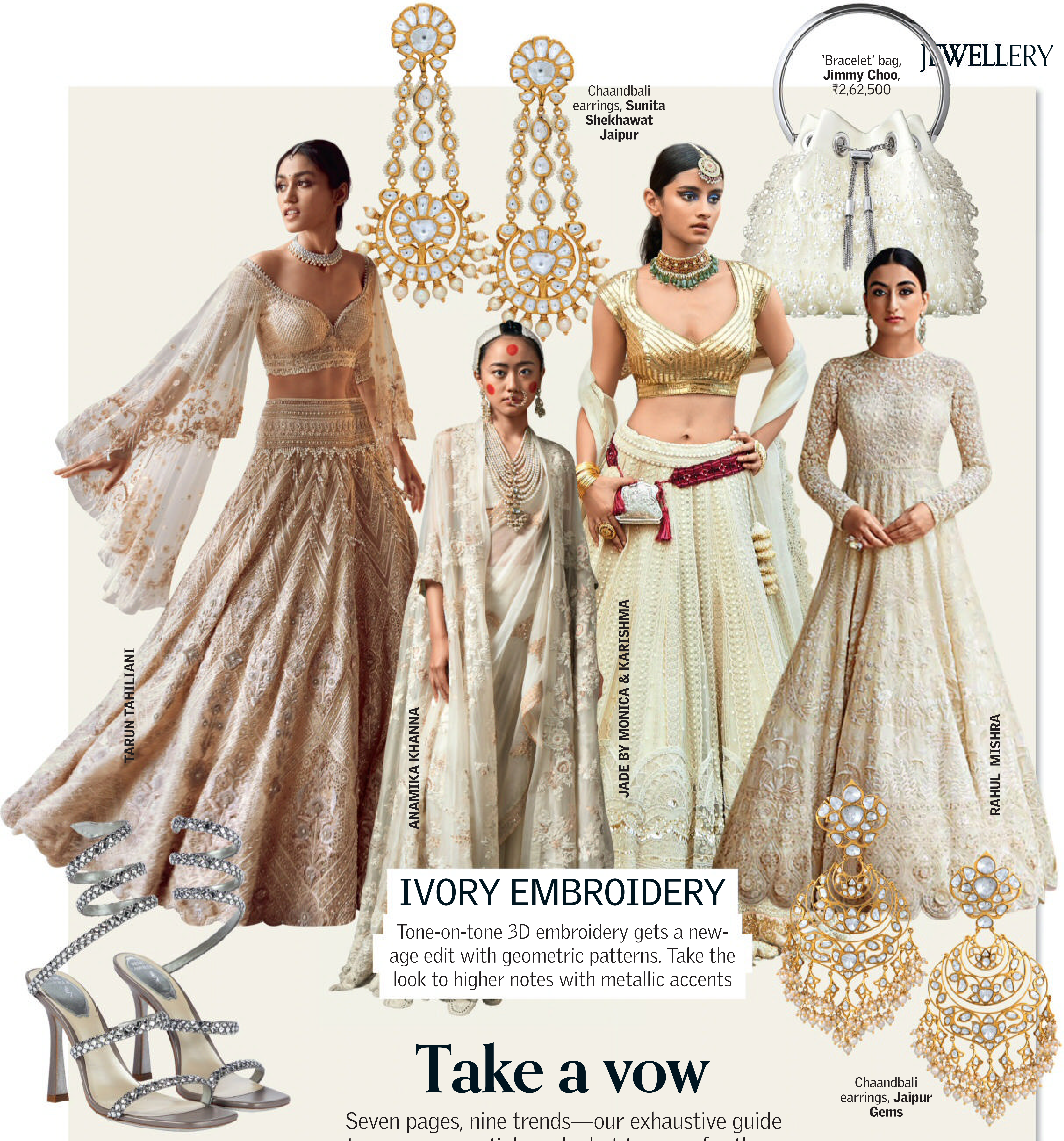
TARUN TAHILIANI
ANAMIKA KHANNA
JADE BY MONICA & KARISHMA
RAHUL MISHRA

Chaandbali earrings, **Sunita Shekhawat Jaipur**

'Bracelet' bag, **Jimmy Choo**, ₹2,62,500

IVORY EMBROIDERY

Tone-on-tone 3D embroidery gets a new-age edit with geometric patterns. Take the look to higher notes with metallic accents

Embellished leather sandals, **Rene Caovilla**, ₹1,00,750

Chaandbali earrings, **Jaipur Gems**

Take a vow

Seven pages, nine trends—our exhaustive guide to new-age nuptials and what to wear for them

"An ode to cultural sustainability, this ensemble features Rajasthani arts and crafts and a collaboration with a Leheriya artist"
—MONICA SHAH

TONE-ON-TONE REDS

Bridal red finds new interpretations beyond the wedding. The new-age bride wears the bold colour to the cocktail and even to the reception. Go traditional in a gold-embroidered ensemble or bring the magic of sequins and puff sleeves to a gown-like red lehenga

ANITA DONGRE

Shoulder bag, **Vipul Shah**, price on request

Chandelier earrings, **Goenka India**

Ruby and diamond bracelet, **Valani Atelier x Gemfields**

Patent leather sandals, **Saint Laurent**, ₹65,000

> "A poetic blend of the age-old crafts of peeta and zardozi placed on a traditional silhouette"
>
> —SHYAMAL & BHUMIKA

Ring, **Jade Jagger**

Leather sandals, **Versace**, ₹93,100

SHYAMAL & BHUMIKA

> "Accents like dori work, fringe, champagne gold zari, contemporary cuts, and tulle drape add a modern charm to this old-world crimson elegance"
>
> —MANISH MALHOTRA

Bejewelled pouch, **Love To Bag**, ₹9,900

PANKAJ & NIDHI

Maang tikka, **Renu Oberoi Luxury Jewellery**

MANISH MALHOTRA

Diamond and ruby necklace, **House of MBj**

Crystal-encrusted sandals, **Giuseppe Zanotti**, ₹82,300

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Hilton HONORS

Gold necklace, **Reliance Brands**

AKAARO

Gold earrings, **Tanishq**

> "The cocktail dress mimics the classical sari of the 16th-century with its use of butis and borders"
>
> —RITU KUMAR

Gold kadas, **Kishandas & Co.**

431-88 BY SHWETA KAPUR

BLACK + GOLD

Name a more iconic colour duo, we'll wait. The power dynamic of midnight black and a touch of gold always goes a long way. Break away from conventional bridal colours for this maximum-impact pairing on saris, lehengas and dresses

RITU KUMAR

Metallic mesh handbag, **Chanel**, price on request

Line leather stilettos, **Bottega Veneta**, ₹69,800

SHANTANU & NIKHIL

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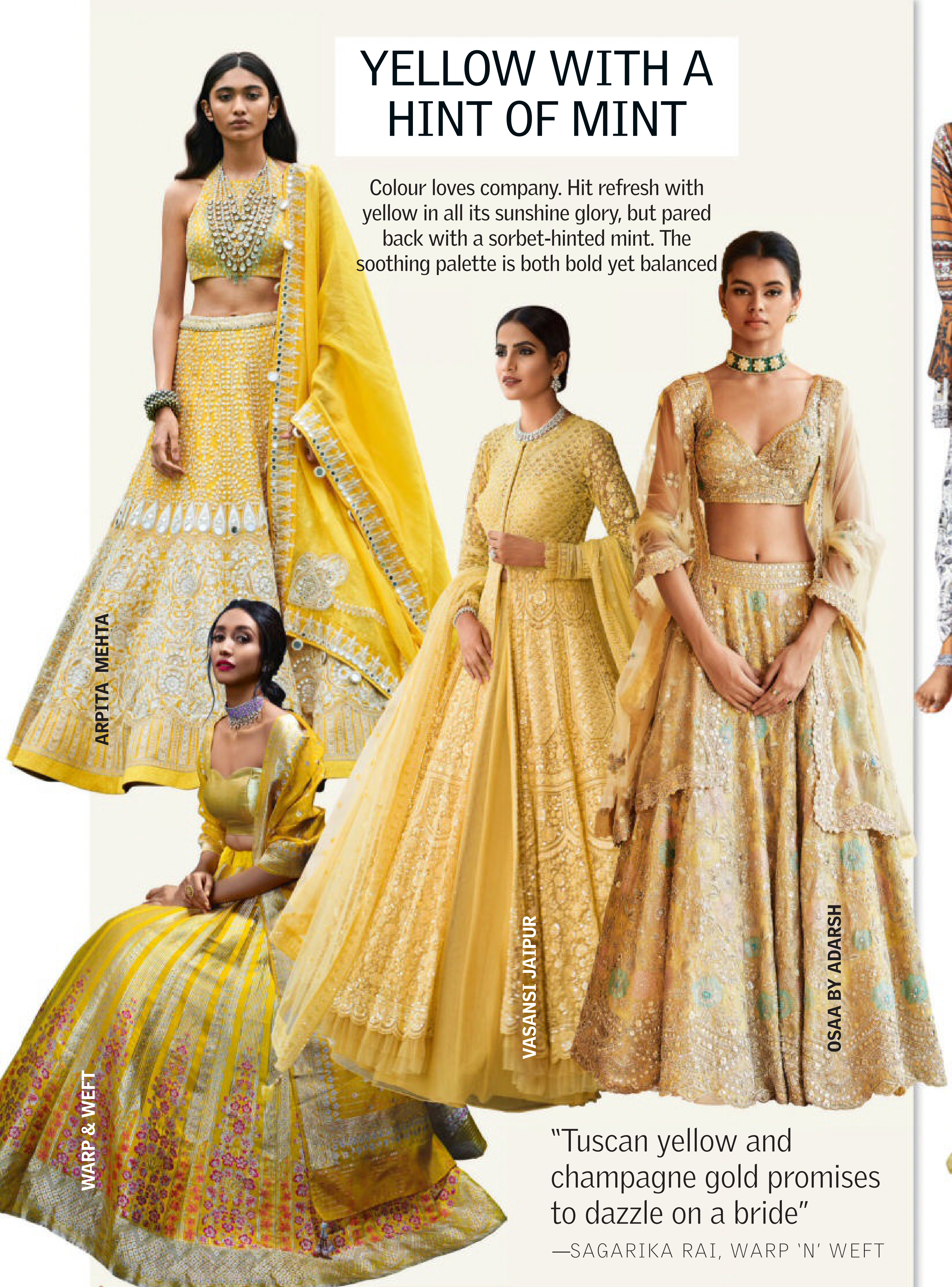
YELLOW WITH A HINT OF MINT

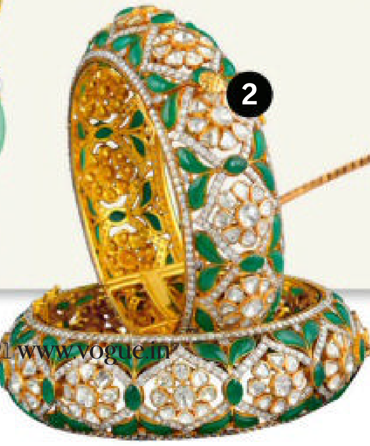
Colour loves company. Hit refresh with yellow in all its sunshine glory, but pared back with a sorbet-hinted mint. The soothing palette is both bold yet balanced

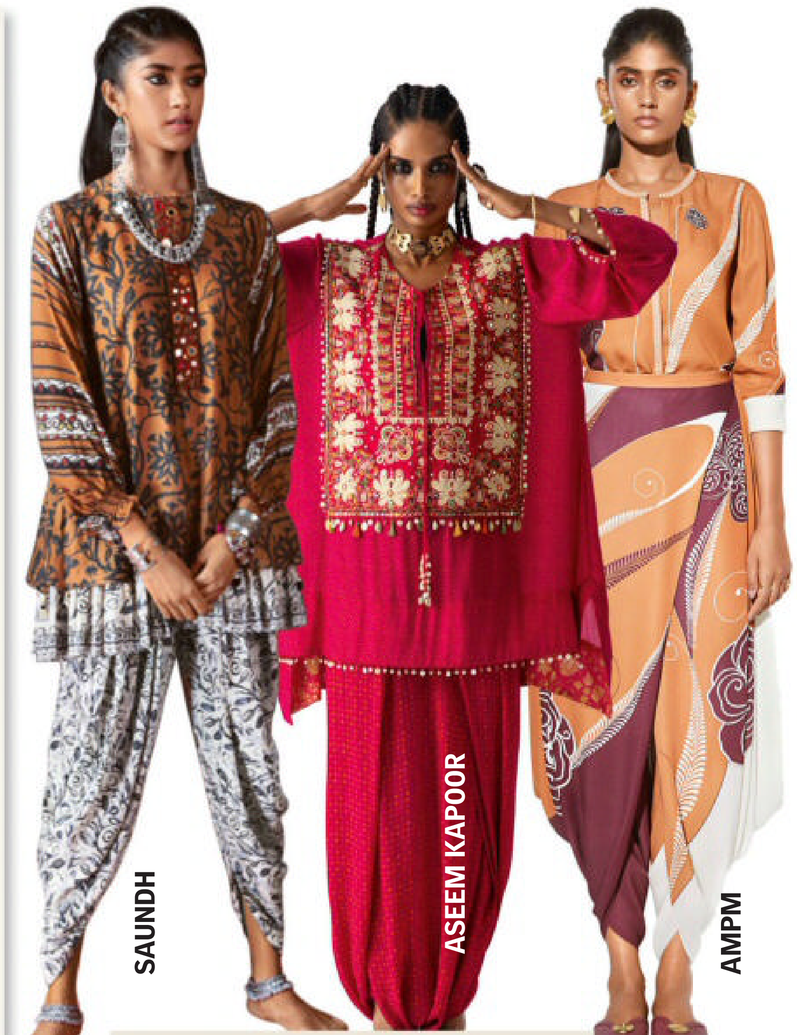


> "Tuscan yellow and champagne gold promises to dazzle on a bride"
>
> —SAGARIKA RAI, WARP 'N' WEFT

WEAR WITH

1. Drop earrings, **Hazoorilal Legacy, South Extension** **2.** Bangles, **Raniwala 1881** **3.** Cat-eye sunglasses, **Linda Farrow**, price on request **4.** Vegan leather bag, **Outhouse**, ₹16,950





DHOTI PANTS

This gender-fluid must-have is making a comeback in trousseaus. Pair it with lengths both long and short for a varied stance

> "With the right fit, you can easily replace a pair of jeans with this modern Indian silhouette"
>
> —PRIYANKA MODI, AMPM

WEAR WITH

1. Necklace and earrings; both **Aurus** **2.** Fringe bag, **Rara Avis**, price on request

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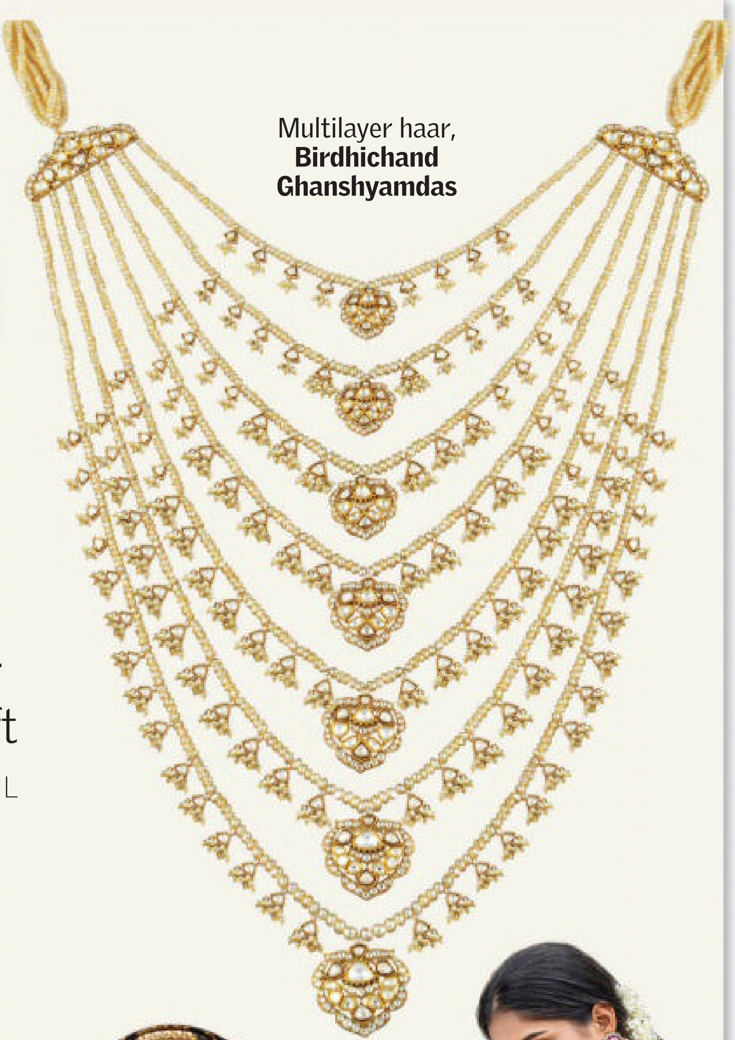
NIKITA MHAISALKAR

DRESSED-UP KAFTAN

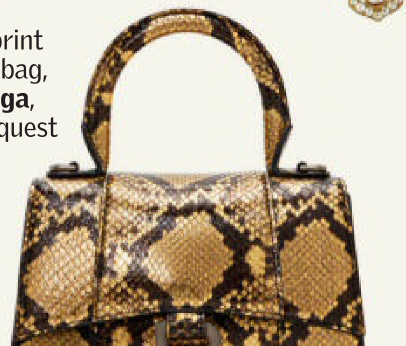
Our pandemic wardrobe mainstay is not quite done serving its multitude of purposes yet. For the wedding season, it finds a new, glamorous energy, especially when accessorised just right

"This long, fitted kaftan in rich tussar bandhani silk revives the age-old craft of ari and mirror-work" —PAYAL SINGHAL



Multilayer haar, **Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas**

Crystal-embellished sandals, **Amina Muaddi**, ₹60,600



Serpent-print hourglass bag, **Balenciaga**, price on request

ANUSHREE REDDY

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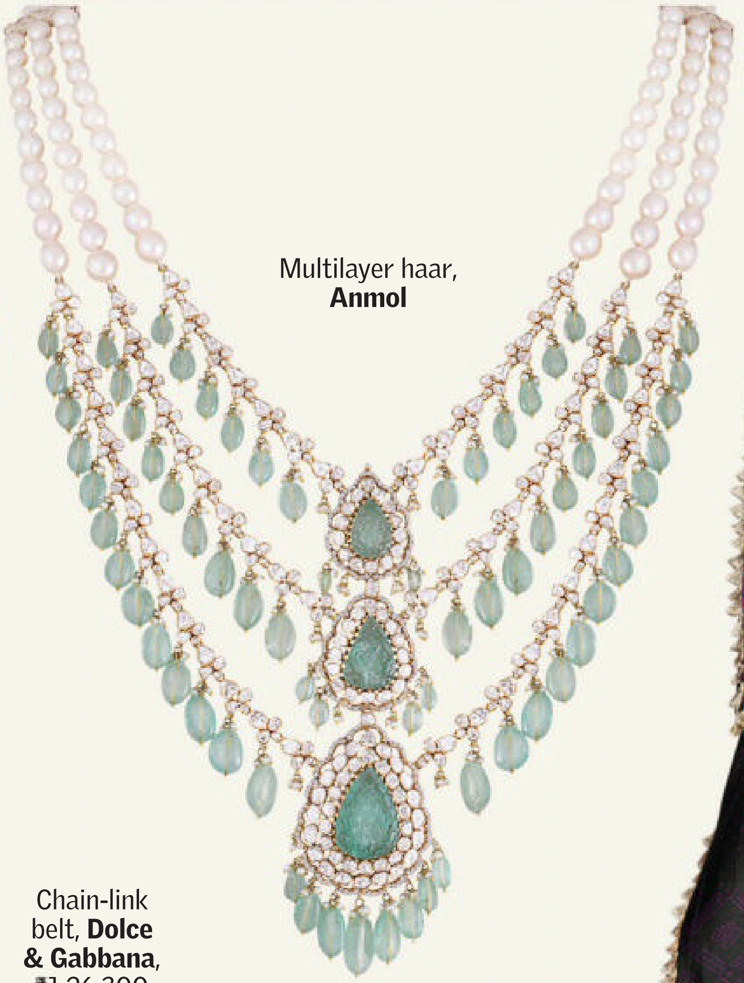

Multilayer haar, **Anmol**

PAYAL SINGHAL

Chain-link belt, **Dolce & Gabbana**, ₹1,26,300

Crystal-embellished heart bag, **Rosantica**, ₹2,06,400

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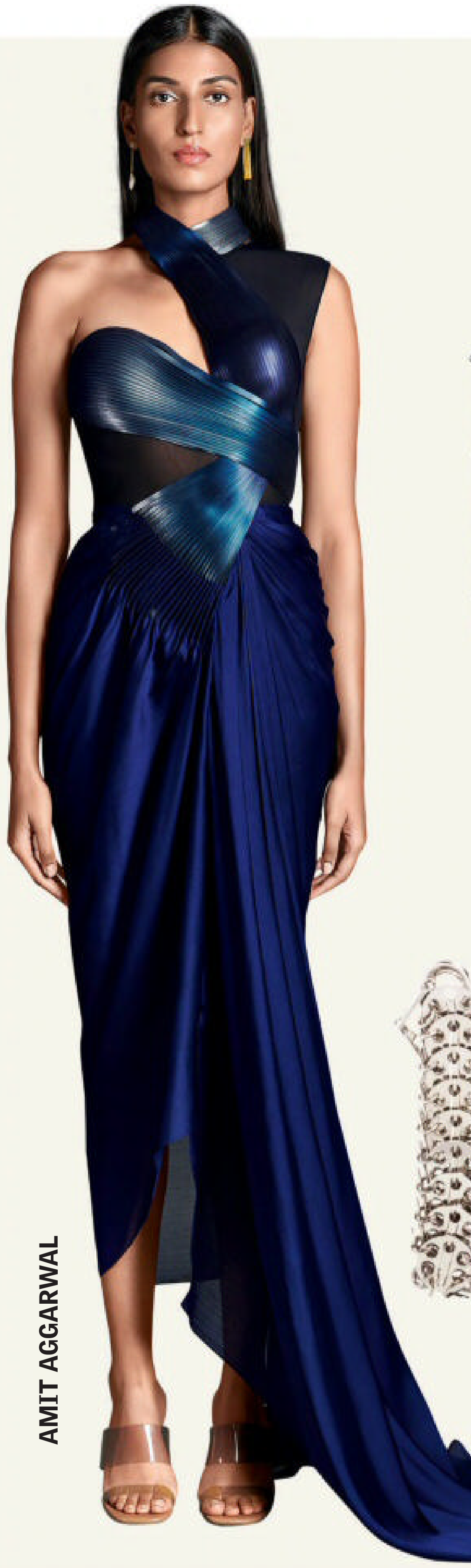
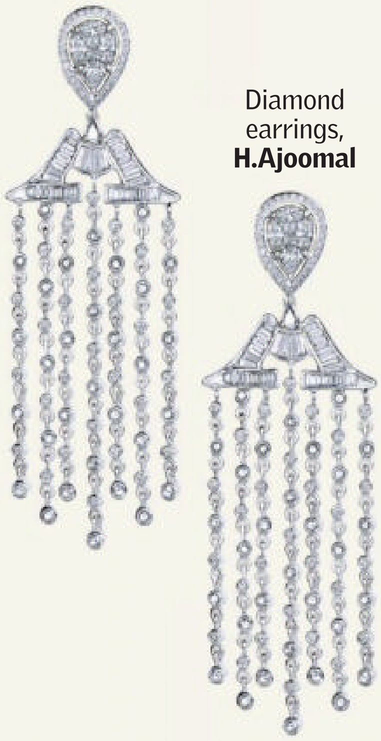
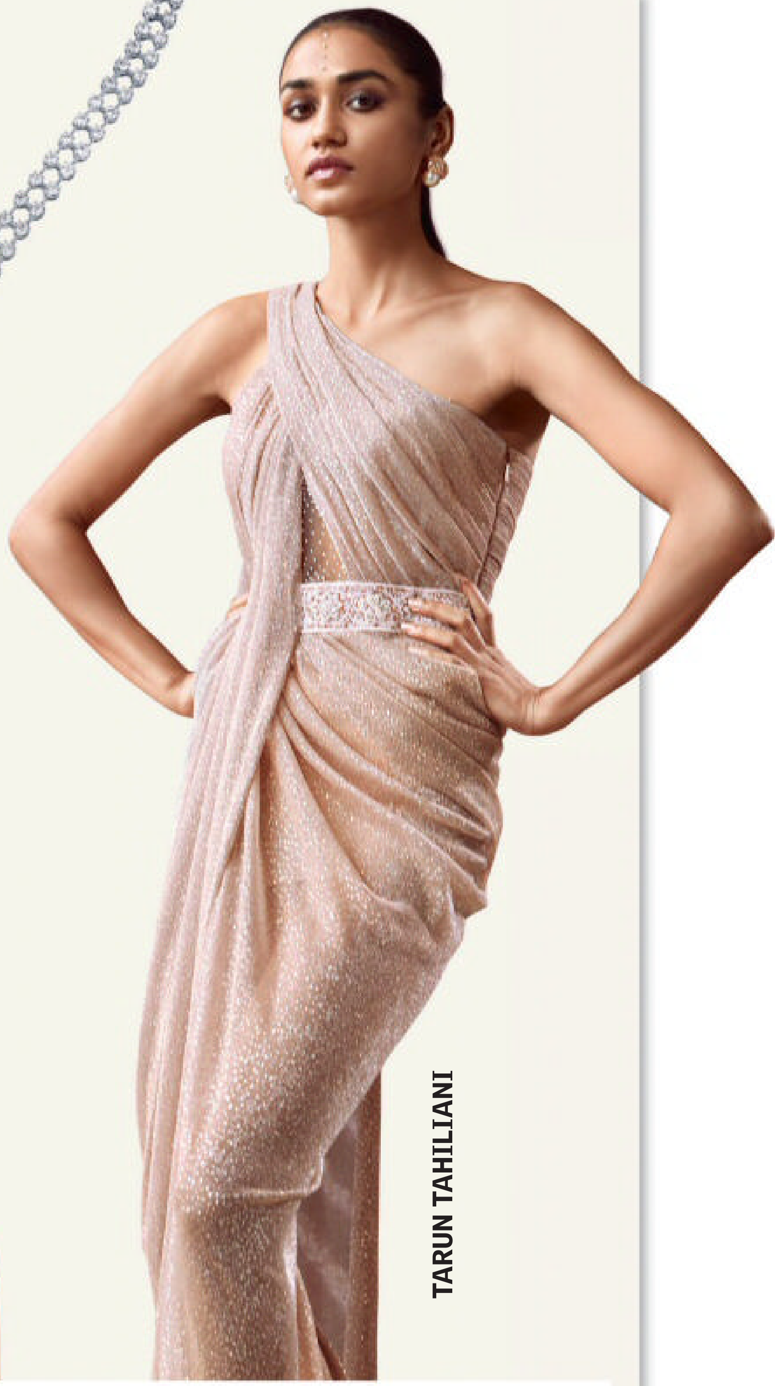
ONE-SHOULDER GRECIAN DRAPES

Cinched and elongating, the Grecian column dress finds its Indian interpretation. One-shoulder and in molten metal, the dress is a perfect point of departure for a new-age fuss-free bride

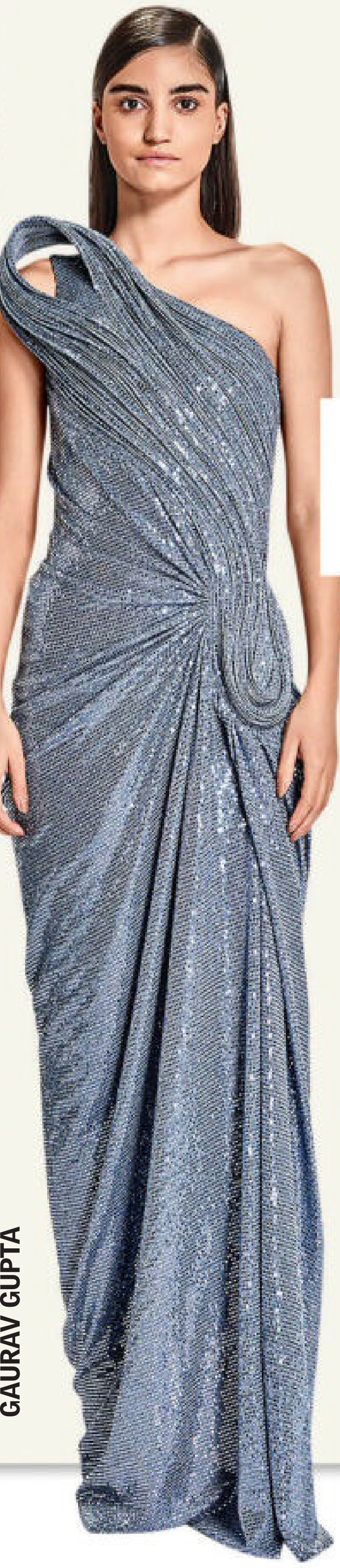

AMIT AGGARWAL


Diamond earrings, **H.Ajoomal**

Necklace, **Orra X Falguni Shane Peacock**


TARUN TAHILIANI

Chain mail shoulder bag, **Paco Rabanne**, ₹1,05,650


GAURAV GUPTA

> "A combination between a sarong, a sari-like drape and a flute blouse, this is an alluring blend of India and Greece"
>
> —TARUN TAHILIANI

Forevermark diamonds set in gold bracelet, **Waman Hari Pethe Jewellers**

Embellished pumps, **Aquazzura**, ₹58,350

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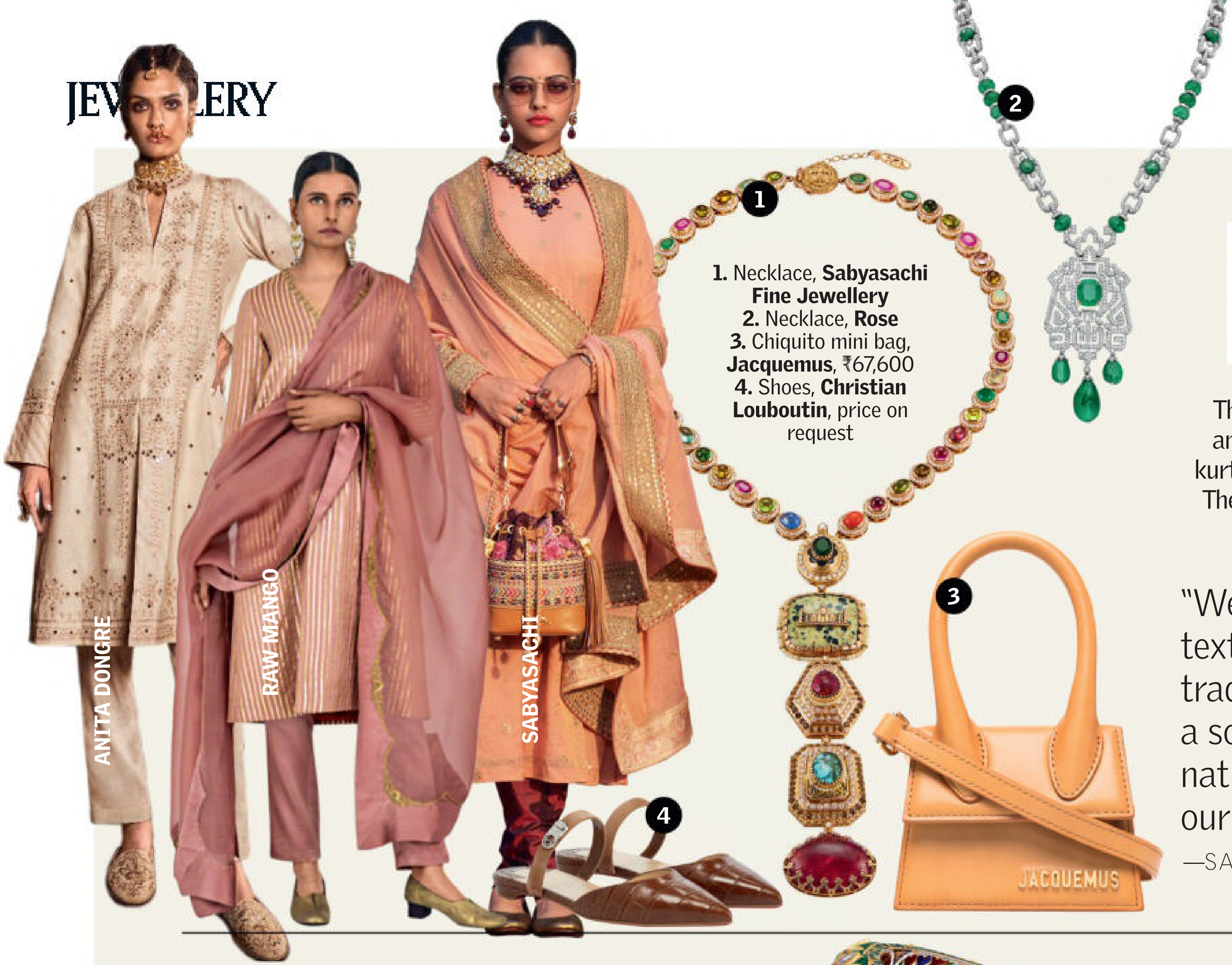


1. Necklace, **Sabyasachi Fine Jewellery**
2. Necklace, **Rose**
3. Chiquito mini bag, **Jacquemus**, ₹67,600
4. Shoes, **Christian Louboutin**, price on request

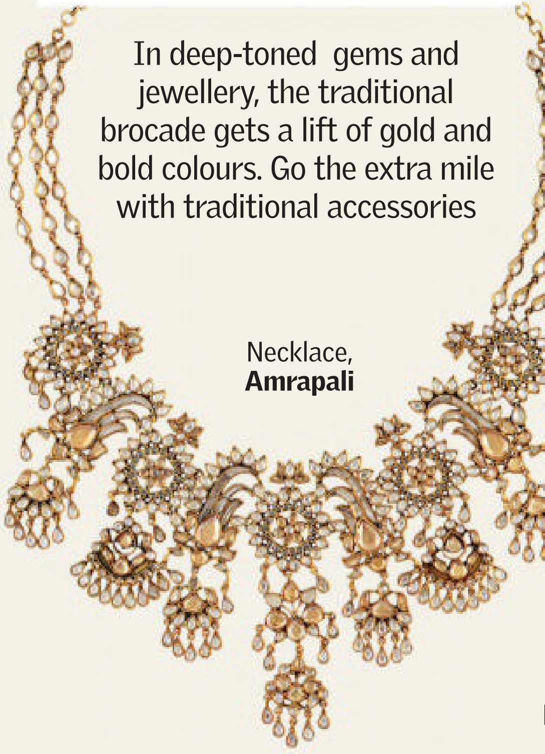
BEST OF KURTAS

Thinking of ditching the sari and lehenga? Opt for ornate kurtas for an at-home mehendi. The ease of the Indian tunic is unmatched

> "We drew from the textile and design traditions of Rajasthan, a softer, sublime and natural extension of our collections"
>
> —SANJAY GARG, RAW MANGO

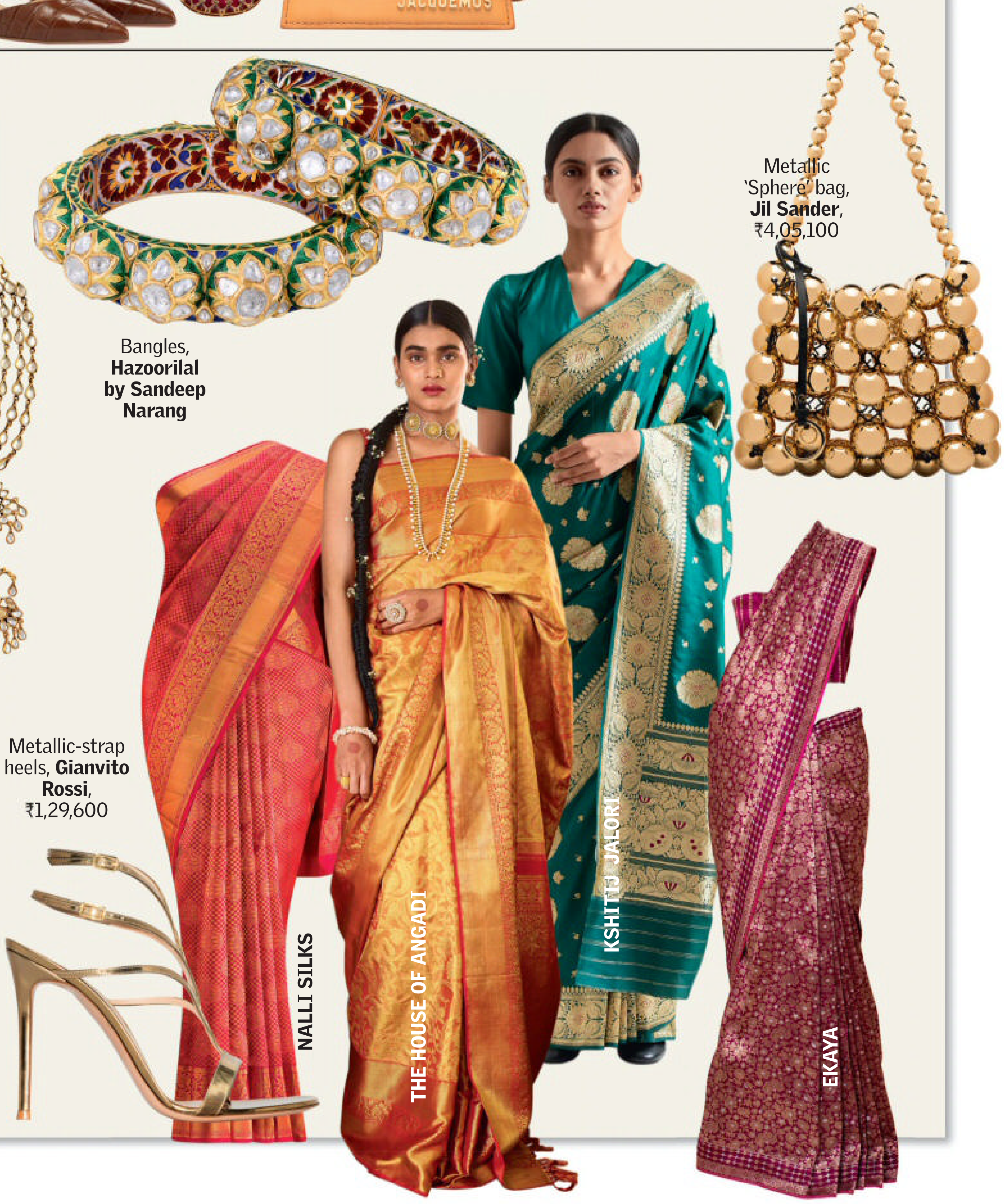
JEWEL-TONE BROCADE

In deep-toned gems and jewellery, the traditional brocade gets a lift of gold and bold colours. Go the extra mile with traditional accessories



Necklace, **Amrapali**

> "The brocade sari is timeless, and this particular sari has expressive details and prints putting the spotlight on Indian craftsmanship combined with Japanese lacquerware craft"
>
> —PALAK SHAH, EKAYA



Bangles, **Hazoorilal by Sandeep Narang**

Metallic 'Sphere' bag, **Jil Sander**, ₹4,05,100

Metallic-strap heels, **Gianvito Rossi**, ₹1,29,600

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COUTURE MEETS THE WONDERS OF NATURE

From conversations about his prodigious beginnings to telling it all about his recent best at India Couture Week 2021, Amit GT reveals his nature-inspired collection, Scintilla

"I believed in what I embarked upon—in some ways, I swam against the tide and yet remained firm," says Amit GT, who recently showcased his newest collection at India Couture Week 2021 and took the world by storm. The year is 2008, and Amit GT has made his debut on the catwalks and ramps of the domestic scene, showcasing a bedazzling array of sweeping evening gowns to an audience that seems hesitant towards this grand style—which set the foundation for the gowns in Indian iterations we seem to love today. Deep down, his artistic vision knew he had already caused a stir in the world of Indian fashion as he set off to revolutionise the European market with his pioneering designs.

Over in the west, the designer spent his years travelling, learning, getting inspired—and dressing the likes of Eva Longoria, Rachel Weisz, Avril Lavigne, Carmen Electra, Whitney Cummings, Toni Braxton, and Morena Baccarin. Paris and Milan came calling, and the designer took off to greener pastures where he would go on to dress some of Hollywood's finest. Every once in a while, however, he'd turn to his roots and showcase in India, too, where his clientele is growing exponentially.

"The collection is an attempt to depict exultation the way nature celebrates happiness through brilliant blooms, scintillating constellations, dew drops, snow falls or vivid colors of the sky," expresses

GT, as he talks inspiration behind Scintilla, his newest lineup that was showcased at Indian Couture Week 2021. From statuesque gowns, elaborate lehengas, sari gowns and sari drapes, to exuberant bustles and trains, the collection explores the avenues of true elegance, iterated with the brilliance of the brand's signature style. An interplay of moods and textures comes to life with brush stroke techniques that tell the story of duchesse and satin gowns—alternating between thick and thin, with long trails and elaborate silhouettes—depicting nature at its best. Organza and the ever-enduring tulle make appearances, too, to deliver hints of elegance and femininity to the collection. Delicate hand embroidery and bead-work illustrate the collection's earthen inspiration, with a colour palette as diverse as nature itself. "This year I did sari drapes as well as sari dresses, earlier such ensembles would be seen only on the red carpet, but now they are being worn at every Indian wedding," he remarks. Of course, as people embrace life in a post-pandemic era, brides are looking for grander, functional ensembles—something the designer brought to the table with Scintilla. "We now give the option to change your gown or lehenga into a simpler outfit by offering detachable bustles. Many may disagree, but I really believe in the next ten years, long trails will be the big thing, which is also what I have done this year," he says. Speaking on the impact of the pandemic on the world of high fashion, he says, "Couture is for special occasions, a pandemic will not change how one dresses for one's wedding or a formal event. Pandemic has in fact made us aware that how short life is and whatever your heart desires you do it, you must not wait for a better time. Your time is now!"

AMITGT

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visit Amitgtcouture.com

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, a sixpence in your shoe," is a traditional Victorian rhyme thought to have originated in Lancashire, England. For brides, especially in the Western world, this idiom has long been followed, attributing these totems as a way to ward off the evil eye.

In India, wearing heirloom pieces is less a matter of superstition and more a conversation on tradition and familial ties. In a country where gold and jewellery is revered as an investment as well as a symbol of prosperity, it's not unusual for pieces of jewellery to be passed down over generations. "Brides have always looked to family heirlooms when it comes to their jewellery, and these pieces now have more value as the craftsmanship from those days just cannot be found now. The same can be said for fashion, which is why many brides look to using old borders and zari pieces in their wedding clothes," says Mohit Rai, co-founder of The Wedding Project, a bridal styling company.

> "Mixing old with new is not only a metaphor for age-old traditions and values to be handed down...but is also significant for preserving arts"
> —KEERAT KAUR, FASHION STYLIST

Looking into maternal wardrobes is not new for Indian brides. Kareena Kapoor Khan wore her mother-in-law Sharmila Tagore's ghagra, restored by Ritu Kumar, for her ceremony. And Isha Ambani Piramal had Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla incorporate borders from her mother Nita Ambani's wedding outfit for her special day. The last year has seen us reassess our connections and relationships and these tokens of tradition have taken on a new meaning.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

With all the talk around consumption habits and fashion's contribution to climate change, among other environmental issues, vintage and heirloom pieces have been ascribed a unique value, especially when it comes to pandemic weddings. Keerat Kaur, a Gurugram-based fashion stylist tied the knot with her lawyer husband Dilpreet Singh in July this year at her ancestral home. For her Anand Karaj (the Sikh wedding ceremony), she wore a red georgette dupatta with gold gota patti work and a navy blue border, which once belonged to her mother, with a beautiful matte-gold kurta sharara set from Rimple and Harpreet Narula. Kaur says, "I decided long ago that I would incorporate my mum's wedding dupatta to complete a traditional look on my wedding day." She teamed the ensemble with heirloom jewellery pieces redesigned by her aunts, who are jewellers. She adds, "Mixing old with new is not only a metaphor for age-old traditions and values to be handed down over generations, but is also significant for preserving novel arts and crafts."

A UNIQUE IDENTITY

Veteran journalist and editor Nonita Kalra says, "Clothes are our material memory." The editor married her long-time beau Bhriguraj Singh in 2018. "When I was getting married for the second time, at the age of 49, I knew that I didn't have to be a 'designer bride'. I always knew it would have to be a sari for me, as I love the classic drape, but I also knew I wanted the sari to have weight. Not just in actual terms, but it also needed to be weighed down with memories. Since both my parents are gone, I wanted to honour them." For her signing ceremony, Kalra wore a cream sari that belonged to her grandmother, while for the reception she opted for her mother's black sari with silver zari work. Ekaya restored the saris and Kalra's friend and contemporary fashion designer Atsu Sekhose crafted the blouses. This mix of something old to something new reflected the editor's ties to the fashion industry and acted as an ode to her family. "The 'old' helps us remember who we are and keeps us rooted in our origins," says Palak Shah of Ekaya, who has noted an increase in the number of brides who come to her store to have pieces restored.

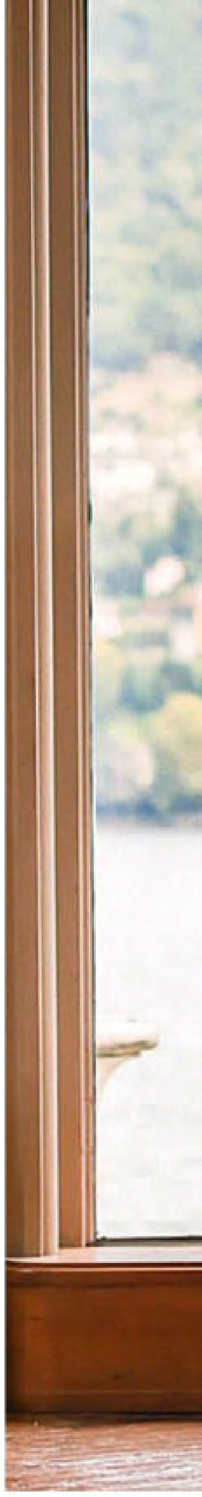
Remembering her roots was top of mind for Los Angeles-based Dr Deepika Chopra, also known as the Optimism Doctor, when she married her husband, the media entertainment executive and investor Alexander Silverman, in 2015. Chopra found an innovative way to include something old >

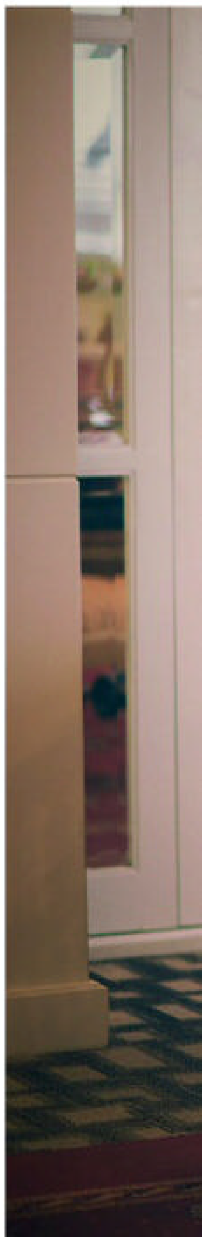
TREND

Something old, something new

From a mother's zari-filled sari to found-in-the-attic French lace, brides are turning to heirloom pieces to add extra significance to their wedding attire. By **Sujata Assomull**

Gurugram-based fashion stylist Keerat Kaur incorporated her mum's wedding dupatta into her bridal look





and something new in her multicultural wedding—she walked down the aisle under her mum's wedding burgundy organza dupatta, embroidered with zardosi, adding dangling kaleeras tied to the edges. She says, "It was so special to feel as if I were being carried and surrounded by her as I took this very significant step." Her 'something new' was a modern update on the classic mangalsutra, designed by her husband, which she wears till today. These details spoke of her own story and connection, not only to her mother but to her motherland too.

THE NEW-AGE APPROACH

As children, many of us liked to play dress-up in our mother's clothes. For designer Nishka Lulla, her go-to piece to play with was her mother Neeta Lulla's gold wedding lehenga. Costume designer Neeta was in charge of upcycling Nishka's wedding ensemble for her wedding six years ago. Says Neeta, "I designed the lehenga with an entire border of Tanjore art, which was then embellished with gemstones and rice pearls. The silk on my lehenga was in tatters but I revived the embroidery and appliquéd them on to Nishka's piece, which took around 40 days of handwork." She hopes that Nishka's daughter Miraya carries on the tradition.

Upcycling is giving brides a chance to experiment with all types of materials. London-based shoe designer Aruna Seth's wedding was originally supposed to take place at Italy's Lake Como last July. But with COVID-19 cases rising, she opted for a small civil wedding instead, moving the Lake Como festivities to September of this year. For Seth, who is of Indian and Jamaican heritage, and her husband Thomas Yoichi Adolff, who is half-Japanese and half-German, being respectful of cultural nuances was imperative. While the wedding is anything but intimate, spanning, several functions, Seth has incorporated upcycling techniques in both her wedding dresses. Her dress was designed by Zuhair Murad, and her veil used lace that came from her previous collections. "I was in Italy designing my new collection and sourcing materials when I came across this beautiful lace from my first bridal collection. I instantly knew I had to incorporate and repurpose it into my bridal veil. This material is a one-of-kind bespoke silver-thread Chantilly from France, which has been made in limited-edition runs, making my veil truly individual." Her Indian wedding ensemble is by Falguni & Shane Peacock, and is adorned with an intricate embroidery of fluttering butterflies (the shoe designer's trademark motif) combined with the threads from her mother's wedding sari.

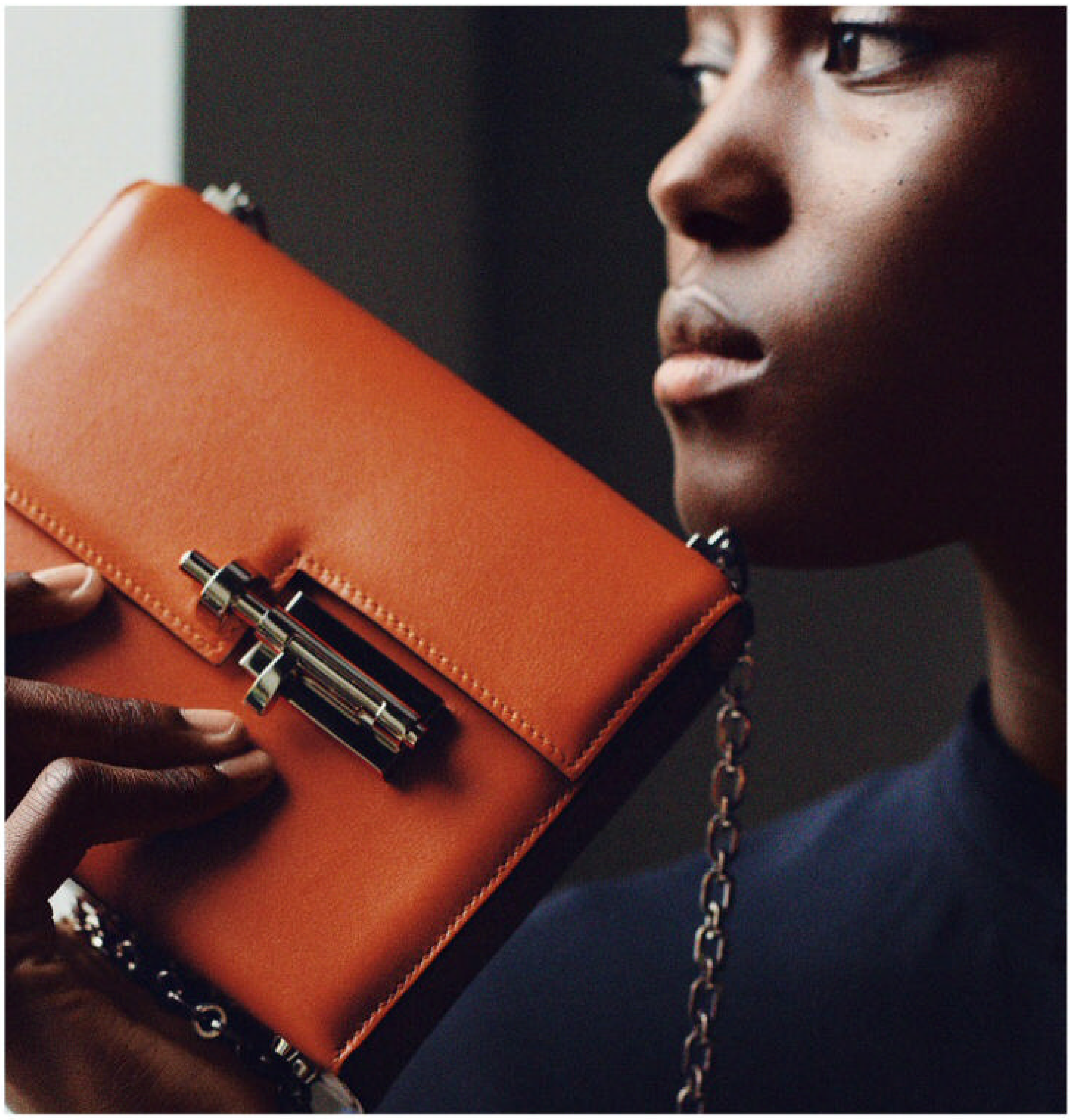
Designer Amit Aggarwal is known for using upcycling techniques in his bridal creations. He has previously created an entire collection from upcycled patola. "There is no question that today's bride is more conscious and experimental," he says. And the use of upcycled materials is a new-age way of wearing something old. "When I tell brides that the embroidery is made from recycled materials like rubber, it lends the outfit a feeling of being unique." He says using upcycled materials give his outfits a 'unicorn' quality, something every bride wants.

As weddings become smaller in size, it is these details that bring a sense of grandeur to this important day. As Chopra says, "I am seeing a trend towards nostalgia and making meaning out of our moments and honouring traditions and rituals that connect us to ourselves and what we truly value. We are starting to scale things back, thin out the fluff from many aspects of our lives and invest in moments that are more potent with significance." ■

Clockwise, from top left: Shoe designer Aruna Seth used lace from her first collection for her wedding; Editor Nonita Kalra wore her mother's black sari at her wedding; Designer Neeta Lulla upcycled her own wedding lehenga at the request of her daughter, Nishka (pictured). *Opposite page:* At her multiculutral wedding, Dr Deepika Chopra walked under a canopy created from her mother's weddng dupatta

Insider's secret

While the Birkin, Constance and Kelly may be the most well-known, Hermès has 50 different styles that marry form and function with ease. **Catherine Fulconis** from the luxury maison rounds them up with **Priyanka Khanna**



Like bras and heels, in the midst of pandemic-induced stay-at-home orders, the handbag was summarily dismissed as a relic of a sartorial past. The reasoning, as Vanessa Friedman summed up in *The New York Times* in December 2020, was based on its very functionality: "What was the point of a bag if no one could go out? Why did we ever think we needed so many of them in the first place? What are we supposed to do with all of those extra totes and purses and clutches?" she wrote in 'The Once And Future Handbag'. But the demise of the handbag, Friedman concluded, was widely exaggerated. The booming numbers in the resale market, the rare Himalayan Kelly that fetched nearly half a million dollars at Christie's (the highest price ever paid for a bag at an auction) and the growing market for collectible editions are all indicators that the handbag is never really going to go away.

What has emerged from the past 18 months is a change in mindset. Now, the need for quality, for pieces that weather trends and generations, that have the patina of inherent style and also whisper quietly of a more conscious approach to fashion, are non-negotiable.

At Hermès, these are the very values the house was founded on, and which have paid dividends for it and its patrons over the years. "At Hermès, we don't make it bags, but objects made to last. Each time we create a bag, our aim is that it is of its >

JACK DAVISON; LIZ COLLINS

CONRAD
BENGALURU

Wedding
Diaries
by Hilton

time, is timeless, and becomes a classic. This is an extraordinary richness, resulting in leather goods with strong style and personality," says Catherine Fulconis, member of the Executive Committee of Hermès International and executive vice president of Hermès international's leather goods, saddlery and petit h divisions.

"Hermès bags express the aesthetics of functionality, purity, refinement and a refusal for useless decoration. This comes from our equestrian origins and the way we used to make harnesses that were designed to be as robust as they were fine, liberating the animal and revealing its beauty. A bag is beautiful because it is functional. Each detail, characteristic or pattern always has its reason. This means we put the best of what we can because in our minds it has to still be desirable in 20, 30 or 40 years. It is more than one life because they aim to be transmitted from one generation to another, to family members or friends. The attention to detail is also about creating bags that are as beautiful outside as inside," she adds.

There's no doubt that the demand for Hermès bags is continually on the rise. The Kelly, Constance and, of course, the Birkin have made their way into pop culture lore, thanks to their colourful origin stories, the well-known women they are named after, the infamous wait lists, and their growing demand and increasing value.

But true fashion insiders know that the house's repertoire actually spans multiple styles. "I think that people don't know we have 50 different models of bags and more than 40 different types of leather. And in each collection, we propose 200 associations of colours and materials," Fulconis adds. "At Hermès, we have a principle for the making of a bag: one person, one bag. The artisan assembles the bag from the first to the last stitch. Each bag is unique because it keeps the trace of the hands and the mark of the artisan. We have many stories to tell about times when craftsmen recognise, at first glance, a model they made years before."

Leather is at the heart of the maison, and the hand of craftsmanship reigns supreme. "The hand is guided by the creative mind. Art and craftsmanship take turns to ennoble the other," says Fulconis, noting that it can take over two years to bring a bag to life.

Here are some lesser known yet incredibly important bags from the Hermès stable.

VERROU

While Fulconis is wary of playing favourites, she does admit a propensity for the Verrou. Designed in 1938 by Robert Dumas, then director of Hermès, it was re-released in 2010. Dumas adapted the stable door bolt into a jewelled clasp for a geometric leather clutch. It is a composition of 25 pieces, a feat of silversmithing that allows opening and closing with a single sliding action and a soft click. This style is perfect for the multitasking life we all live today, and continues the conversation of a less-is-more approach to consumption. Like many of the house's styles, it does double duty, transforming from a clutch to a bag with a leather shoulder strap, a jewellery-inspired chain or a webbing strap. "It tells the story of the sublimated ordinary by transforming everyday objects to make it a jewel," says Fulconis. >

Clou Médor. *Inset:* Catherine Fulconis. *Opposite page:* Verrou

> "The attention to detail is also about creating bags that are as beautiful outside as inside"
> – CATHERINE FULCONIS

JACK DAVISON; LIZ COLLINS

A WOMAN ON A MISSION

Through sheer determination, excellent leadership skills and a strong business acumen, Suchita Oswal Jain, Vice Chairman and Joint Managing Director of Vardhman Textiles—India's leading manufacturer and exporter of yarns and fabrics, has established her company as one of the country's leading textile conglomerates along with being an inspiration to women across the world

With creativity being at the forefront of things in the ever evolving landscape of fashion and textiles, Suchita Oswal Jain, Vice Chairman and Joint Managing Director of Vardhman Textiles has always led by example. As a third generation entrepreneur taking over the family business, she had to prove her mettle and started her career in Vardhman as an Executive Director and gradually worked her way up. Credited with initiating the first fabric manufacturing plant of the group, she has long since made a huge name for herself in the textile industry.

On this journey to the top, she has implemented several initiatives to cement the position of women in Vardhman Textiles. From organising workshops that encourage rural women to work with the company without trepidation, to convincing the governments of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to allow women to work night shifts, Suchita has done a remarkable job of shaping Vardhman into a beacon of gender diversity. Today, out of the 30,000 people that Vardhman directly employs, 35% are women and more than 13% work night shifts comfortably. Talking about the same, Jain says, "When we requested permission from the state governments, we kept a plan of action ready to ensure safety. Firstly, only those women were to be allowed who resided within our factory premises. Further, we employed more women as security officers, supervisors, etc."

> "WHEN WE REQUESTED PERMISSION FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENTS, WE KEPT A PLAN OF ACTION READY TO ENSURE SAFETY. FIRSTLY, ONLY THOSE WOMEN WERE TO BE ALLOWED WHO RESIDED WITHIN OUR FACTORY PREMISES. FURTHER, WE EMPLOYED MORE WOMEN AS SECURITY OFFICERS, SUPERVISORS, ETC."

She bolsters this cause with her "Respect for all" drive that reinforces the values of teamwork, trust, coordination and all that's required to promote a healthy work environment amongst employees at every level. The awards that line her shelf range from the Outstanding Women Leadership Award conferred by World Women Leadership Congress to AsiaOne's Women Empowerment Entrepreneur Award 2019-20 and serve as a testament to her revolutionary vision.

An inspiration to women all across the world, Jain is the embodiment of a one-woman-army and has paved the way by creating thousands of employment opportunities for women in Vardhman Textiles. Financial independence is key to women gaining freedom and with Jain's brilliant skills, women are being provided with opportunities to gain exactly that. She is a true trailblazer not just in elevating her company to a global status but also in elevating women to gain independence. Jain isn't just an entrepreneur, but also a change maker.

For more information, follow @suchioswal on Twitter

From left: An artisan at work; the Birkin 3-en-1; Hermès A/W 2021-22

HAUT À COURROIES

The first-ever Hermès bag was created in the early 20th century as the house expanded its metier from saddlery to functional leather goods. The idea was to design a bag to transport a rider's boots and saddle in style. With the arrival of the motorcar, this was then reinterpreted as a travel bag. Over the years, the Haut à Courroies has been designed in raw or printed canvas, leather, and felt. It has 73 multiple pictorial expressions, from a leather landscape in patchwork and appliqué, to a cosmic scene painted on leather, and more. For Fulconis, a more recent application, the Haut à Courroies Cargo, only highlights Hermès's ability to marry form and function seamlessly. "It is inspired by the military universe, while suiting the needs of today. You have pockets for a bottle of water, AirPods, a smartphone and more. There is a place for everything, and everything is in its place. This role of serving functionality has been part of the house since its foundation."

CLOU MÉDOR

"At Hermès, we have a very singular creative process, highlighting two important ingredients: a joyful dialogue between artisans and designers, and freedom of creation. We have a palette of more than 40 full-grain leathers, along with an incomparable collection of textiles with iconic canvas offerings such the Toile H," says Fulconis. The Clou Médor was imagined as an elegant leather collar for dogs in the early 20th century. In the 1920s, it was adapted into jewellery and then into a belt before becoming, in 1993, the Médor secret watch, a piece with punk-chic accents that conceals the time beneath its cabochon. Over the years, its metamorphosised into a minaudiere, a shell sheathed in leather, carried like a clutch or slung over the shoulder with a detachable and fully concealable strap. Its delicate pivoting clasp is also reworked into a pyramid shape, for a double Médor effect.

DELLA CAVALLERIA

Fulconis admits that this was a challenge for artisans due to the need to integrate construction and create a woman's handbag with a clasp. "It's a great example of how two interlocking elements give birth to a total bag. The construction of the bag and the design of the clasp are closely linked: the half horse bit hugs the bag's shape and the extremely curved shape of the bag comes from this fusion between leather and metal. For the first time, the curve has been worked on both the front and the bottom of the bag, and not for the flap." Accompanied by an adjustable strap, it comes in two formats: a satchel style for day and a miniature version for night.

THE BIRKIN

The story of the Birkin is one well-told. Undoubtedly the most in-demand style in the Hermès stable, it has spawned countless wait lists and even a book dedicated to the pursuit of ownership. Fulconis believes that this style, in particular, allows for all manner of experimentation. It was reimagined for Jane Birkin by Jean-Dumas, as a spacious holdall, to carry all that she needed as a young mother after a chance meeting on a flight. "For me, it was the first real working bag. It was imagined as a tote, as functional as a basket, as comfortable as luggage and as refined as a handbag. Practical and elegant, it is as beautiful opened as it is closed," says Fulconis. She highlights the exceptional Birkins:

"The Birkin 3-en-1, seen in the autumn/winter 2021-22 RTW show was constructed as a puzzle: one bag, two elements, three uses. When placed inside the bag, the interior pouch creates a trompe l'oeil Birkin. There is a real playfulness. "

"The Birkin Fray Fray, in leather and canvas, reiterates its original function—that of an everyday tote bag."

"The Birkin Faubourg is an exceptional, humorous piece illustrating the façade of the Faubourg Saint Honoré boutique on a classic Birkin bag, requiring five different materials and more than 20 hours to make." ■

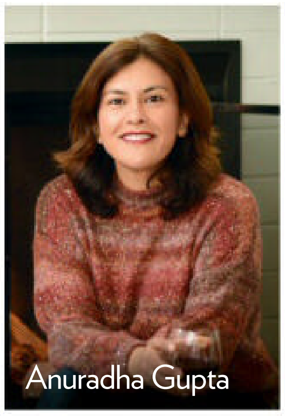
GASPAR RUIZ LINDBERG; CHRIS PAINE; STUDIO DES FLEURS

IT'S A MATCH

Armed with an MBA, a major in psychology, and an innate ability to connect like-minded people, CEO and founder of Vows For Eternity, Anuradha Gupta helps discerning individuals find their life partners through her bespoke global matchmaking service

In an age where the focus for matrimonial websites is all online, Vows For Eternity takes pride in being a one-of-its-kind service that offers a personalised, offline service. Vows For Eternity (VFE) is a premium, confidential matchmaking service with its headquarters in New York and an established presence in Mumbai, Delhi, and London. We talk to Anuradha Gupta, founder and CEO to know more about the brand's bespoke global services.

How does VFE go beyond the usual parameters of matchmaking?
While we have a website and social media presence, all our matchmaking happens only after we intimately understand our members and the needs of each one, not ever via an algorithm or any other cookie-cutter method. It takes time for something meaningful to evolve and that's why I don't work with biodatas. Through numerous interactions, we help members narrow down on what is most important—shared values, upbringing, and personality fit. It's important that our members take their time in getting to know one another before deciding if they want to commit. After all, you can't hurry love!



Anuradha Gupta

What is most important when you are matching potential partners in today's day and age?
We work with members who are serious about getting married. We are not a dating site or a casual connection site, and luckily, we find that those who approach us are ready to take that plunge. We are also clear that we aren't a service that offers quick fixes. Lastly, we encourage members to keep an open mind. We find that a lot of times members' families would prefer matches from similar backgrounds but there is beauty in diversity and sometimes you have to follow your heart and see how it works out. A lot of things fall into place when people let that happen.

Take us through the various membership options available at VFE...
The Signature Service is our bespoke offering—designed for members for whom success and affluence are a given and the baseline is "nothing but the best." The members in this tier tend to be industrialist families, celebrities and extremely successful professionals. Our second offering, the Premium membership, is designed for individuals who are extremely driven and are accomplished in their fields of work.
While matchmaking is not rocket science, what makes it complicated is that people are at the heart of what we do. From being total strangers, they begin to share some of their most intimate memories with us, as we get to know them better. We become a sounding board for them, for very personal decisions and help align expectations to reality. Our process ends either when the membership period ends or when the member finds their life partner.

How has Covid-19 impacted VFE as a business?
Our ethos is that of being a service that assists clients who are looking to share their lives with that one special person. However, we have noticed how the pandemic has impacted the way our clients now view relationships, even more seriously than before. Many have lost valuable time in not being able to find partners through the usual ways, which has meant that we are seeing a renewed interest now in clients trying to find meaningful, long-lasting relationships. In a way, it's never been a better time for people to look for committed relationships.

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Personalized Matchmakers for the Global Citizen

Olivier the conqueror

Since taking over Balmain at the age of 25, **Olivier Rousteing** has transformed it into a revolutionary force in French fashion. **Nathan Heller** meets the designer set to shake up the world

Photographed by **ANNIE LEIBOVITZ**

Olivier Rousteing is sitting in a makeshift greenroom, talking with a group of business founders trying to reimagine the future of France. He is dressed, as usual, in black: black coat, black trousers, and, on his feet, clogs like black lapdogs, covered with faux fur, his fingers shielded in long golden rings. When an attendant leads him to the stage wing, he leans against the wall and scrolls through Instagram. Rousteing became creative director of Balmain in 2011, at age 25, and since then has consolidated the house's power by courting the gaze of an extremely online demographic.

"We might stay a bit afterward," he murmurs to a colleague—he anticipates a swarm of attention. The conference where Rousteing is speaking is not about fashion; it is called Fighters Day, and it's a gathering of French entrepreneurs in the American mould: techies, start-up doyens, and 'self-made' men and women of the kind who, until recently, scarcely existed in the French imagination. On-stage, in French, Rousteing speaks about his decision to set off on his own at 18. "I left my fashion school after six months," he says. "I fought because I had no school or background behind me, just determination and desire. I came to Paris, and it's now 10 years since I've been creative director at Balmain." He adds, softly, "It's always a battle against yourself."

A Black man raised in Bordeaux by two middle-class white parents, he is the highest-ranking person of colour at the old Parisian houses. The panel is in Station F, a former freight centre converted into a sleek start-up campus off Paris's techie Quai d'Austerlitz. The audience is young, diverse and multitalented, but Rousteing brings something distinct: an understanding of the way taste, creativity and business intersect.

"For me it's been very important to use clothes to talk about subjects such as diversity and 'pop'—pop culture, population," he says. "When I started my Instagram in 2013, I had a meeting with my president, who asked, 'What are you doing? Luxury on Instagram is impossible. It's cheap.'"

Since Rousteing's wild ascent began, he has understood himself as an avatar of new paths. But recently, he'll tell me later, he has wondered whether something has been lost in the gloss and glamour of ambition he has cultivated, and he's started breaking barriers of a more personal kind.

The keystone of this new effort, for Rousteing, has been the documentary *Wonder Boy*, by the filmmaker Anissa Bonnefont, which focuses on Rousteing's fraught, heartbreaking efforts to learn the story of his birth parents. When it came out on Netflix in June, it was avidly watched in France, a success that local observers found unsurprising.

"Olivier understood very early on that social media and the digital sphere were inherent to the future of fashion," Pierre A. M'Pelé, himself a leader among the generation of French fashion journalists to reach prominence through online followings, recently said. "It wasn't just about shopping online, but communicating directly with your audience."

When Balmain opened in 1945, it seemed the incarnation of France's chic post-war glamour. Pierre Balmain dressed Sophia Loren, Josephine Baker, Lady Astor, and the queen of Thailand, combining trim tailoring with gorgeous flows of cloth to create strikingly proportioned profiles. After he died, in 1982, the house moved through the visions of Oscar de la Renta, who presided starting in 1992 and carried Balmain's classicism into the new millennium, and an upscale reimagination of glam rock by Christophe Decarnin, under whom Rousteing joined the house, in 2009.

When he ascended two years later, he combined mass-market pragmatism (he counts his 2015 collaboration with H&M among his proudest achievements) with a certain stridency of form and cut. Under Rousteing, sales have increased sevenfold. Almost from the start, Rousteing had anti-elite ambitions, with an emphasis on the ambitions: reach beyond the domain of the fashion industry, he thinks, and you can summon pop-scale audiences.

This was the Rousteing who commanded a battalion of avid volunteers—he dubbed them "the >

OPEN ACCESS
"He represents the good in fashion: energy, passion and fun," says fellow designer Kim Jones of Rousteing.

Shirt and trousers, **Balmain**

Balmain Army"—on Instagram. In the public eye, Rousteing cannily constructed himself as a character with close-buzzed hair, hollow cheeks, impossible coolness.

Few figures have been more central to Rousteing's fashion—and more emblematic of the brand of enthusiasm sometimes referred to as 'Balmania'—than Kim Kardashian West, whom he met at the Met Gala in 2013. "He's really fun and flashy, and he can go from sculptural to really casual while always making you feel glamorous," Kardashian West explains. "Each of the pieces feels over-the-top in the best way."

For years, the fashion establishment was slow to warm to his reorientation. During the long lockdowns, though, as life and work across the world became screen-mediated, Rousteing's vision started to seem more practical and naturalistic, and his efforts to pitch his fashion brand beyond the red carpet or the boutique window looked prescient. At a moment when a lot of designers have sent their shows back to basics, he has expanded venues and made the whole thing even more of a public display. Thousands of tickets to his 10th-anniversary Balmain runway-cum-concert in September, Balmain Festival VO2 (the line-up included Doja Cat and Franz Ferdinand)—Balmain's second effort in this large-scale multimedia vein—were released online one morning in June, for a minimum donation of 15 euros, and were gone by the end of the day.

Rousteing came to his identity as a designer the same way he came to his identity as a person: gradually, and in public view. As a child, he was always sketching and often lonely. "I was really scared to go back to an orphanage," he explains to me. "I needed to make sure that my parents didn't think they had made the wrong choice."

Academic success didn't bring him popularity. "I was off on my own. I never had friends," he says. "I always loved to dress to be who I wanted to be, which was not always easy because of, you know, the meanness of kids at school."

At home, he dreamed of the grandeur of the era's global pop culture and the supermodels who embodied it. "There's no one that, for me, was a greater influence than Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Claudia Schiffer," he says. What he loved especially was that their influence went beyond the fashion industry: his mum, who knew nothing of fashion, knew them.

His decision to go to fashion school, at Paris's ESMOD, flummoxed his family. His decision to leave fashion school after only a few months, launching into a competitive creative field with neither entrée nor degree, concerned them more. Rousteing describes his first years in fashion as an effort to match and merge: to try to be a designer of the sort he thought the industry wanted. Yet reception of those early collections was mixed, occasionally harsh. "It's hard when you see people telling you that you have no talent and are not good enough to be in fashion," he says. In answer to these anxieties, Rousteing doubled down and altered his approach. After three years as Balmain's creative director, he experienced what he describes as a breakthrough: he decided that he would try to be himself.

"I think everybody needs to be loved. The difference between me and the rest is that I just want to be loved by everybody"

Rousteing says that Instagram seemed like a revelation along those lines. He saw that he could use it to build an organic following for the brand. Yet today, the largest followings tend to go to the largest brands, which have staffed, strategic feeds—social media is part of corporate marketing. That's why, Rousteing thinks, normal people have moved on, seeing such platforms as Instagram as too managed, too inauthentic, too top-down. So Rousteing has again changed lanes and swerved ahead.

At the moment, he explains, Balmain is going all-in on entertainment—music, broadcast series, film—and text. "I think words are going to be so much more important in the future," he says. "People are going to look for stories more than a picture that's going to vanish after two seconds." As Balmain sees it, the future is narrative.

Rousteing sometimes describes himself as an embodiment of 'la nouvelle France,' a term that has become in equal parts hopeful and vexed. The prospect of a more open, competitive, putatively meritocratic France has freeing appeal, but on the other side of the ledger are concerns that 'la nouvelle France' is basically an Americanised France: manic, mercenary, and increasingly indistinct. Rousteing finds this view out of joint with the realities of an international age. "Am I Americanised? Yes. I'm proud of it," he tells me. "I don't think there's anything wrong about being influenced by another country. This is the beauty of being global." >

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For most of Rousteing's life, both he and his adoptive parents believed that he was biracial. In *Wonder Boy*, he learns during his search for his adoption file that both his parents were Black Africans, his mother from Djibouti and his father from Ethiopia. At the time of his conception, his father was 25, his mother 14. She noted no relationship between them in the papers filed at his birth—a caesarean delivery because, it's thought, her hips were too narrow to bear him. When Rousteing learns this information, he begins to sob uncontrollably before the documentarian's camera. *"C'est atroce,"* he says: atrocious, horrible. He'd hoped that they were two adults in love.

At the end of the documentary, Rousteing writes his birth mother, whose identity he's not allowed to know, a letter, for delivery through channels, but he never has it sent. He doesn't want to force himself on her world, he says. Perhaps, he hopes, she'll see the documentary and recognise her son in his success. Maybe she will get in touch herself.

One bright morning, when the city is warm, humid, and redolent of jasmine, I visit Rousteing at his home in central Paris. A private courtyard leads to a vaulted staircase trimmed with ferns and banana plants. The decor—black and white with a natural-wood floor and a gabled glass ceiling shaded by slatted wood blinds—has a resort-like, equatorial-cabana air.

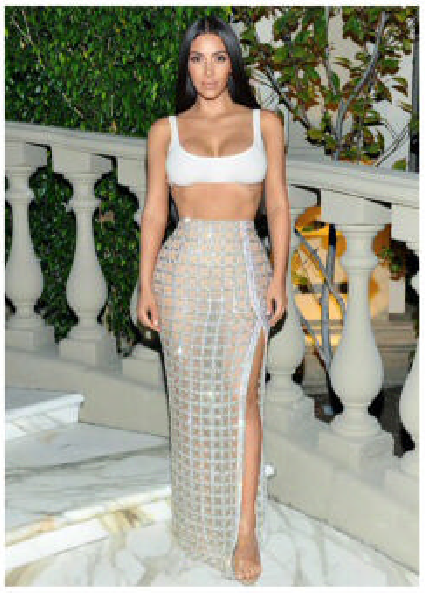
Rousteing gets a cup of coffee, collapses onto a low chair and lights up an American Spirit. He is dressed in a simple black hoodie, his thumbs frayed through its cuffs, and black leggings.

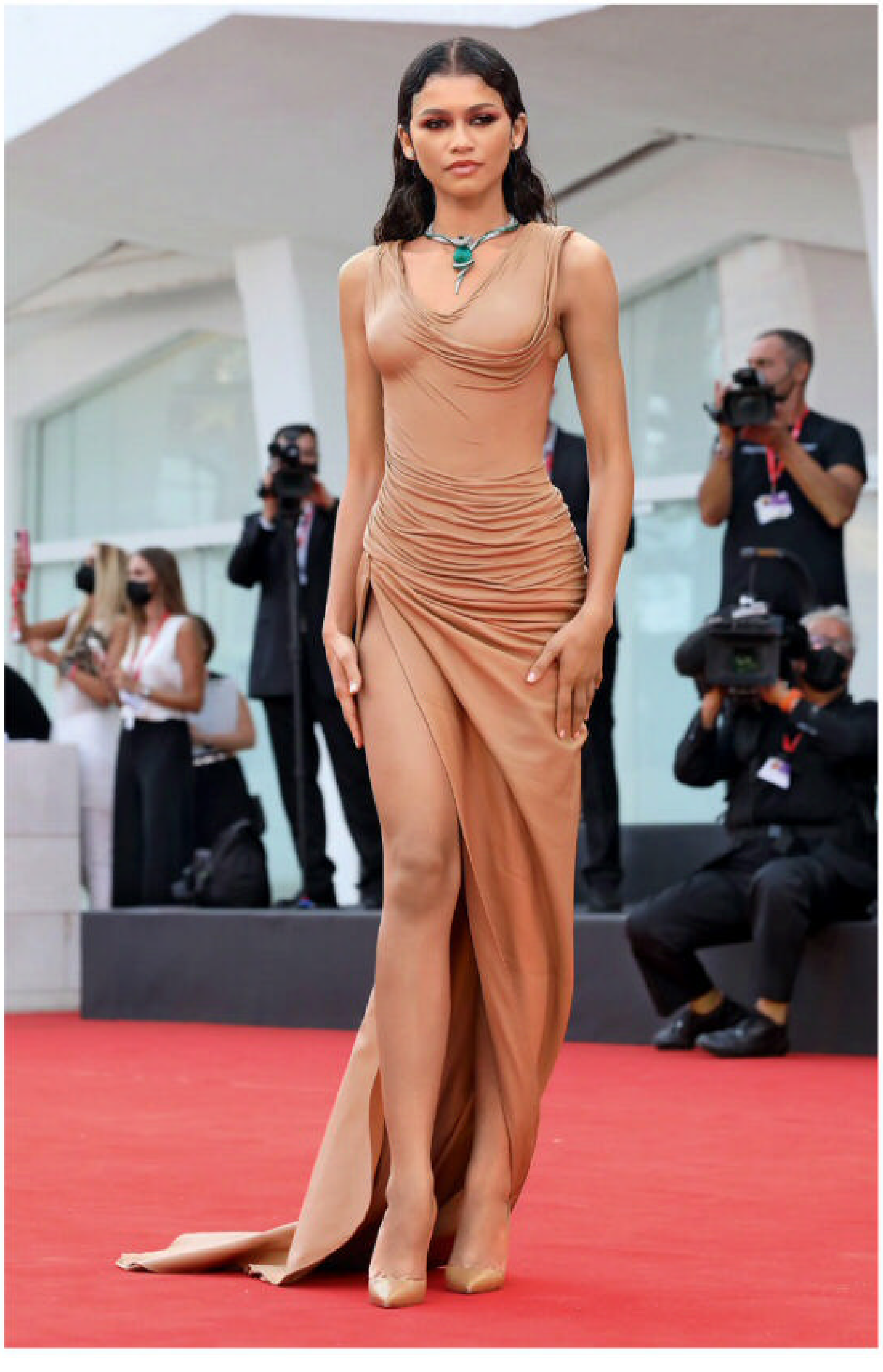
"I've always had a kind of carapace, a kind of a mask," he tells me. "I think sometimes I went too far and played a character who became myself more than who I was." Lately, though, Rousteing confesses to me, he has begun to worry about the public mask becoming his real face.

"I think it's important for designers to say that they are struggling," he says, "and it's hard, and not an easy world."

Wonder Boy, then, was Rousteing's maiden effort to stop pretending, to be open and self-revealing—"The camera was like a contract with myself," he says. Yet it quietly emerges that he prefers to put himself out there before the lens, with its great, anonymous audience, than before individual people in his life. Rousteing is a 36-year-old gay man who, by his account, has not had a boyfriend in 15 years. In the documentary, he chats with one of the few confidants he keeps, his driver Mohammed, about a handsome young man at his gym whom he doesn't dare approach. We watch him returning to the vast home where, after work, he eats by himself at a large table, like the lonely astronaut at the end of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. >

STAYING POWER
Clockwise, from left: Rihanna, Kim Kardashian West and Zendaya all wearing Balmain.





GETTY IMAGES

THE PRODIGIES OF TOMORROW

Creative collections, sustainable innovations, editorial shoots and fashion films—Whistling Woods International School of Fashion presented a mélange of ingenious visions.

Whistling Woods International, one of Asia's premier Film, Communications, and Creative Art institutes, is understandably a hub of unparalleled creativity. From screenwriting, cinematography, editing and direction, to the latest innovations at their School of Fashion—the institute is giving a well-deserved platform to young, talented minds who are paving the way to a better tomorrow. The students indulged in their own passions to showcase immense artistry at the annual fashion graduation show—Aiyanna 2021. Imagination and innovation took a fanciful flight at the showcase. Fashion and style were given an ode through inventive materials, dramatic silhouettes, elaborate cuts, and defining embellishments. The overarching theme—Beyond Stillness—served as the canvas for the creativity of the graduates of BA in Fashion Design.

Inspired by the elements of nature, earth, water, air, and fire, the showcase was a kaleidoscope of fashion ideas, which merged with technical expertise that brought a sense of professionalism. Of course, as we turn over a new leaf in this precarious post-pandemic phase, sustainability, too, received a rightful place in the iterations of students' designs through 100% compostable and sustainable t-shirts, natural dyes in batik pattern, and the contemporising of traditional styles such as the *Kunbi* of Goa. While the details and intricacies of fashion remained avant-garde and chic, the fashion graduation show wasn't just about fashion on the ramp, but rather, a looking glass into a more sustainable future.

Creativity was further brought about through editorial photoshoots, fashion films, presentations, research projects, which were highly appreciated by the jury that consisted of industry stalwarts and eminent personalities—fashion journalist, author, and consultant, Meher Castelino; celebrity stylists, Pranay Jaitly and Shounak Amonkar of Who Wore What When and couturier, Shahab Durazi. "The inspiration, execution and careful thought given to sustainable fashion and the present global climatic condition was kept carefully in mind, it was such a pleasure judging the latest collections by the graduating students," remarked Castelino. Whether it was the collaborative effort of the fashion, music, filmmaking, and event management students or the brilliant innovations of the fashion show itself that made it a success; one thing is for sure—talent took the center stage at Aiyanna 2021.

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“I’m really lonely, but I’m not asking for sympathy,” he tells me. “I have friends”—people like Kardashian West, Cara Delevingne, his driver, and some old buddies—“but I don’t have a lot of friends. “I don’t do many dinners, I don’t go out much.” His image of being an impossibly cool party boy always out on the town, he says, is just that—something that he finds necessary for success and the wide acclaim he knows he craves.

“I think everybody needs to be loved. The difference between me and the rest is that I just want to be loved by everybody, not one single person,” he says. “I need the eyes of the public to feel alive.”

Rousteing admits to me that he still does not feel he has attained enough success to find peace, and wonders whether he ever will. He asks whether I know the myth of Icarus. “The story is about flying, flying, flying until you burn yourself, and I think it’s a bit of the story of my life,” he says. “I want to be more free. But being free can also be a danger, because you can sometimes dream too big.”

When the Fighters Day panel ends at Station F, everybody on the dais stands, and the audience rushes the stage. A cluster has formed around Rousteing, three- or four-people deep, as he squats at the edge of the stage, looking magisterial, fiddling with his rings, patiently listening to people as they tell stories or pitch him their dreams.

Then all at once it’s time to go—the other panelists, unaccosted, have cleared out—and Rousteing is passed between two staffers, squeezed through the stage door by two more, and shuttled down a hallway, where he’s intercepted by a phalanx of guards in dark suits. They whisk him out a side exit to the street, and from there towards the black SUV in which Mohammed waits.

Rousteing is wearing his black COVID-19 mask, and his other, more personal mask, too: cheeks sucked in, sunglasses on, the perfect image of a glamorous, much-photographed star. Somewhere between the theatre and the car he lights a cigarette, and then, with an air that could be relief or resignation, crushes it underfoot, rushes forward, and is bundled into the car’s open door, swallowed once again into the shadows of a private world. ■

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS *Clockwise, from left:* Model Julia Stegner wears a Balmain dress. Model and actor Ajani Russell wears a Balmain jacquard top and skirt. Actor Zazie Beetz wears a Balmain crop top and skirt

Hair: Nigella Miller; braids for Beetz by AntoinetteBlack *Makeup:* Tyron Machhausen *Fashion editor:* Tabitha Simmons

ANNIVERSARY
EL KORS

Decades of style

For the past forty years, **Michael Kors** has been the arbiter of contemporary Americana. Closer home, **Ruchika Sachdeva**'s Bodice has spent the last ten years exploring modern Indian fashion. We take a look at these two labels and their milestone moments

MICHAEL KORS

His brand of laid-back American chic made **Michael Kors** a billionaire, but his story began in the city that never sleeps, says Lynn Yaeger

From left,on Ashley: Wool cashmere jacket, cashmere dress, shoes; all **Micheal Kors Collection**. *On Justin*: Herringbone parka, trousers; both **Michael Kors Collection** T-shirt, **Intimissimi**. Boots, **Doc Martens**. Beanie, stylist's own

I thought New York was Oz," Michael Kors says of the city where he made his reputation, the place that gave birth to his enormous success, the town that he loves fiercely. This is the 40th year that Kors has been at the helm of his eponymous business, an enterprise built on his light-hearted reverence for meticulous, classic American clothes, an empire that now comprises clothing for men and women, shoes, handbags, watches, jewellery, eyewear, perfume and more.

The designer is at this point a billionaire, the recipient of countless honours, known to millions for his role as a judge on *Project Runway* and his charitable work in the fight to end hunger. And though his is a quintessential American story—really, a New York story—the rest of the world has embraced his vision (he now boasts more than 800 shops internationally). As it turns out, the longing for the perfect turtleneck, a beautifully cut trouser, a classic coat with just a soupçon of transgressive wit, is universal.

Are you surprised at how huge it all became? I ask him. "I am," he replies. "I came of age when there were such distinct borders for a designer. I thought, 'You're an American designer, you're going to design for Americans.' English designers dressed English women, the French dressed the French. I never thought that American fashion,

From left, on Tygapaw: Satin coat, leather trousers; both **Michael Kors Collection**. Vest, **Re/Done from Matchesfashion.com**. Shoes, jewellery; stylist's own. *On Avion:* Sequinned coat, **Michael Kors Collection**. Boots, **Syro**

other than Levi's, could be something that would be embraced globally. I mean, did I ever think that I would walk down the street in Kuala Lumpur and see five Michael Kors watches and seven Michael Kors handbags? No, I did not."

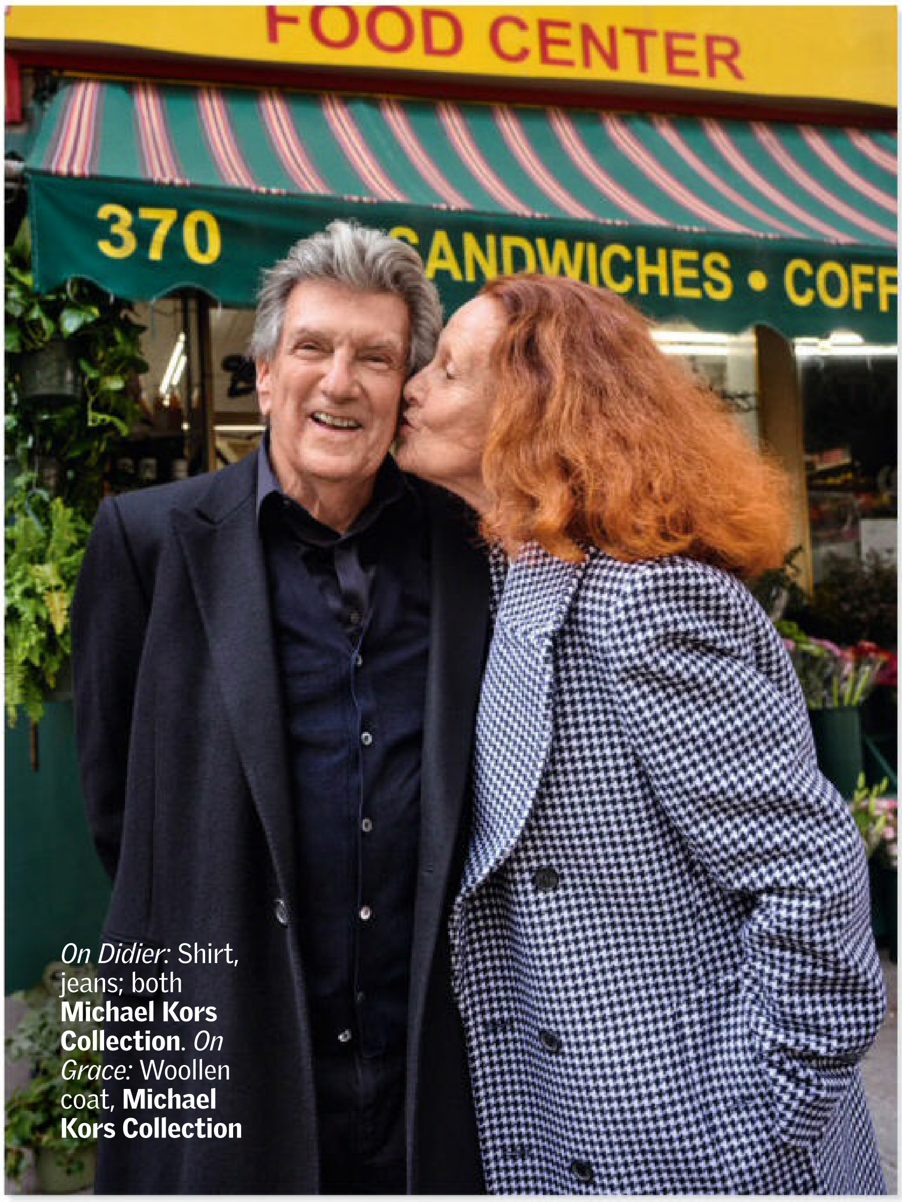
He found his people at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, though he didn't last long. "I quit school while still a student [he got a job at the beyond-trendy boutique Lothar's, on 57th Street, across from Bergdorf Goodman] and to this day, my favourite thing in the world is being on the sales floor," says Kors. "Zoom has been a lifesaver during lockdown," he confesses, "but I am such a people person that the flat monotony of Zoom is something that I never truly fell in love with."

At Lothar's he met the women he calls the 'global rich', people whose effortless elegance and nonchalant chic informed his own ideas about style. "I thought they were so intriguing—Marella Agnelli, women like that. But also celebrities, like Muhammad Ali and his wife Veronica, Goldie Hawn, Diana Ross... It was the '70s, they were just walking around."

But suddenly—how fickle is fashion!—Lothar's tie-dye aesthetic cratered and the boutique's owners asked Kors to design a few things. One day, when Kors was in the window, his mouth full of T-bar pins, he saw "this tall, elegant woman staring at me, and she comes in and said, 'Who designed these clothes?' I said I did. Then she said, 'My name is Dawn Mello, and I am the fashion director of Bergdorf Goodman. If you ever do your own line, call me.' I went home and sketched the entire collection that night."

In short order, he made the samples, begged and borrowed equipment, got a friend to model and showed the results to Bergdorf. "I delivered everything in my aunt's Mercedes, in garment bags." He convinced the store to give him a trunk show and

PHOTO: JUSTIN FRENCH. STYLING: DENA GIANNINI. HAIR: EVANIE FRAUSTO. MAKEUP: HOLLY SILIUS. NAILS: MARY SOUL. CASTING: STUDIO BAUMAN. PRODUCTION: THAT ONE PRODUCTION.
DIGITAL ARTWORK: PRISTON POST



On Didier: Shirt, jeans; both **Michael Kors Collection**. *On Grace:* Woollen coat, **Michael Kors Collection**

they were stunned when the cream of Park Avenue society showed up. How did a 21-year-old kid know this crowd? "From Lothar's! They came to my trunk show and they all bought something. And I was off to the races."

Asked whether this kind of origin story is possible for a 21-year-old kid today, he is reflective. "What I would say to a young designer starting out is, be willing to fly by the seat of your pants. I didn't have a fashion show for the first three years. You're wasting your money if you're not ready. I realise the light and the glare of the internet is so intense, but don't try to design a whole collection. Focus on something you really love, keep it small at first. I am always excited to see designers who have a point of view and know their customer; a combination of creativity, empathy and business savvy. I think Telfar does a brilliant job. I am also a fan of Peter Do and of Bode. I think they are all carving their own niche."

He got the first inkling of the future of fashion in the late 1990s. "When I became the designer for Celine, I realised this isn't so cut up by region anymore." He had always been shoe- and bag-obsessed ("Maybe because I'm so casual") and it dawned on him that, unlike clothing, accessories are impervious to the size and age of the wearer and the >

Clockwise from opposite page: Michael Kors; three sets of city residents pay homage to Kors and New York. Model and entrepreneur Ashley Graham with her husband, cinematographer and director Justin Ervin. Artist, musician and producer Tygapaw with artist girlfriend Avion Pearce. Hairstylist Didier Malige with fashion editor Grace Coddington

> "What I would say to a young designer starting out is, be willing to fly by the seat of your pants"
>
> —MICHAEL KORS

From left: Chef and restaurateur Danny Bowien with set designer Sara Hiromi. Looks from the Kors 40th anniversary show on Naomi Campbell, Shalom Harlow and Bella Hadid

climate where she lives. He found himself thinking, "Does something work in Jakarta?" "What's going in Sydney, in Sao Paulo?" instead of "Does that work in Chicago?" There was a world out there—a bigger world.

The ascent of accessories and their essential democratic character—if you couldn't have the ensemble, you could maybe have the stilettos, or the bumbag, or the stockings, or the card case—coincided with what Kors calls the casualisation of fashion. "I have to say, I'm guilty—personally and as a designer," he confesses. "What we put on the runway in Michael Kors Collection can be opulent, but it's pretty laid-back. I can moan and groan, and say why are people going out in bike shorts, going to the movies in a jog bra, but the reality is, this breakdown of the rules has been happening my entire career, and we can't go back. How do we find the happy medium?"

He is, he admits, also trying to find a happy medium, a balance, in his own frenetic life. Asked what he has learnt from the past year, he answers, "One word: appreciation. Appreciation for every little thing—a store that sells those chocolate-covered almonds that you like, a favourite restaurant, your friends, the people you work with, touching something in a store, the rustle of the tissue paper. I am such a Type A, so speedy, maybe it's good to slow it down a notch?"

Kors is an unrepentant theatre fanatic, hell-bent on seeing every curtain rise from Broadway to the West End. In fact, for his autumn/winter 2021-22 show, he filmed his models (no live audience last April) sauntering in feathers and leather near the Great White Way, marquees for still-shuttered shows shining in the distance. (He confides that were he not a designer he would have loved to be a Broadway producer.) "My kind of good fortune is so rare. It started for me here in New York City, what could I do to give back?" Kors explains. Back in the 1980s, when we were torn apart by the AIDS crisis, I heard about God's Love We Deliver… The hunger thing really snowballed as I started travelling globally. I thought, there is enough food, how do we partner? How do we lasso the power of social media, our fans, our customers?" This October will be Kors's ninth year supporting the Watch Hunger Stop campaign. So far, more than 24 million school meals have been delivered to children around the globe through the organisation.

To give back, to fully appreciate the small things along with the bigger things—and the unfathomably huge things—these are the lessons that Kors has learnt. And if humanity has determined anything over the past 18 months, it is that we are one world, one global family. "We were in the South Pacific, we're on a little speck of an island and there's a lovely little pearl shop in the middle of nowhere. We walk in, and the girl is wearing a dress from the Michael Michael Kors diffusion collection. She says, 'Are you…?' I say, 'You're wearing one of our dresses!' She says, 'You know the piece?' 'I know every piece that we make!' 'Even still?'" she asked this boy from Long Island, looking at his own work, no doubt beaming just a little, a million miles from his beloved New York City. "Even still."

NISHANTH RADHAKRISHNAN; INDIGITAL MEDIA

BODICE

As the label turns ten, **Ruchika Sachdev** ponders the lessons she's learnt. By Shalini Shah

At 23, Ruchika Sachdeva was setting up Bodice, the Delhi-based label which, from the outset, came with an aesthetic clarity that eludes decade-old brands. Now, Bodice is a decade-old brand. It won the Vogue India Fashion Fund in 2014 and the Woolmark Prize in 2018. The traits that define the clothes—tailored but not stiff, fluid but not frou-frou, impeccable but never insipid—ensure a Bodice garment is always distinctly so. Sachdeva's Lakmé Fashion Week finale collection this year featured emerald-green silk shirts with sleeves bearing the label's signature pleats running down their length, colourblocked shirts that brought to mind Barnett Newman's paintings, full-sleeved shirt dresses that went from tan to navy to rani pink... The colour palette was new; the rest, a continuation. (The former she partly attributes to the COVID-19 pandemic and the reflection—and risk appetite—it sparked.)

When we speak on the phone, Sachdeva compares designing clothes with meditating, "the idea of striving for clarity". She recalls how growing up in a busy home in West Delhi spurred the desire to go the other direction, to simplify. "I don't like calling it minimalism because all the clichés strip it of the nuances." She shares with us three key learnings.

THE CRAFT

"First and foremost, I've learnt the skill of how to make a good-quality garment, and I'm still learning. It's a craft. It's using a fabric, something that a person directly wears on their body, engineered in a way that it can be washed and worn many times. In a creative profession, you can't learn everything in college. I thrive on travel. I've looked at garments everywhere. I've seen clothes up-close, turned them inside out, stretched them, pulled at them, looked at yarn, fabric, textile. For me, the journey of design started from craft; I wanted to learn how to create a good-quality garment before I understood what it meant to be a designer."

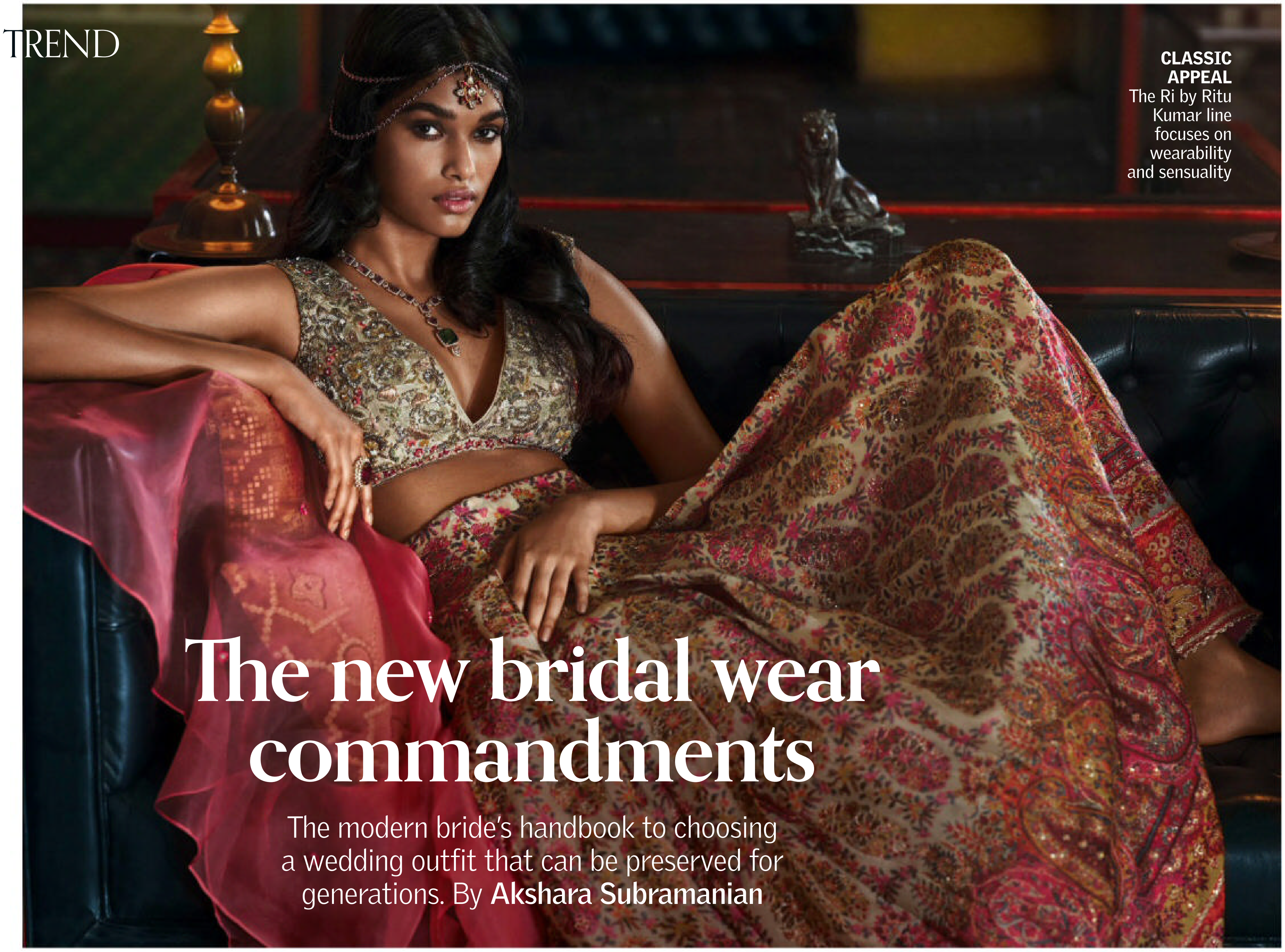
THE BUSINESS

"Gone are the days when you created a collection every six months. Now people expect things from you. But more than people's expectations, you want to pay your bills, right? You can say you don't care about that side of things, but I do. I'm running a business. What's our revenue? What our expenditure? This aspect of the business has been fascinating. I enjoy it equally."

THE PEOPLE

"There was a time when I hired people who were older than me. From there I've reached a place where my team members are younger than me. It's a talented team; they know my mind. Now I feel I have a team that I love and I'm learning how to navigate those relationships—how to empower them but at the same time challenge them, be able to count on them and vice-versa, because it's never easy." ■

> "I don't like calling it minimalism because all the clichés strip it of the nuances"
> —RUCHIKA SACHDEVA



CLASSIC APPEAL
The Ri by Ritu Kumar line focuses on wearability and sensuality

The new bridal wear commandments

The modern bride's handbook to choosing a wedding outfit that can be preserved for generations. By **Akshara Subramanian**

Heirlooms are a symbol of sustainability—the intricate detailing that goes behind creating these pieces has longlasting essence. Brides look at their wedding outfit as a piece of art and see it as a wonderful way to connect with their roots. Amrish Kumar, CEO of Ritu Kumar on the Ri by Ritu Kumar A/W 2021-22 collection talks to *Vogue* India about his commandments for bridal wear:

Embrace the shift back to classics

"Post-pandemic, we're definitely seeing the annual fashion cycle move towards more classic pieces. The focus for us is wearability and sensuality. And I'm referring to sensuality as an Indian aesthetic construct, something that's timeless."

Invest in multigenerational pieces

"Brides are moving back to designs that are traditional, memorable, representative of family, and are heirlooms that can be passed on. Our approach to bridal wear has never been fad-driven, but we're certainly seeing that brides are veering back towards classic styles."

Pick classics that have global influences

"Over the last few years, there's been a new interpretation of classicism. There is an opportunity for brides to mould classics to express their own personalities through colours and new silhouettes. The collection features a combination of soft, romantic hues like ivory but you'll also see a festive palette that includes mustard, coral and shades of blue."

Opt for 'lightness'

"There's an expectation around ease and openness in bridal wear today. In this collection, you'll spot wearable fabrics like organza, Banarasi kadhwa silks or kadha hua, which is an exclusive technique of handloom weaving that is impossible to imitate on a power loom. We've also used Chanderi, jacquard and zari tissue that are light yet luxurious."

Heritage is the secret to heirlooms

"Our new pieces may be adapted to modern sensibilities, but we don't compromise on the craftsmanship that has been passed down over the years. We've played with embroidery techniques including the intricate, single-stitch threadwork technique known as Kashida–Kari as well as Zari-ka-kaam, which is fine ari and zardozi embroidery, stumpwork and cord embroidery." ■

"We're definitely seeing the annual fashion cycle move towards more classic pieces"
— AMRISH KUMAR

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Prime time

In the latest Bond blockbuster, actor **Naomie Harris,** better known as Miss Moneypenny, rolls up her sleeves and gets ready for action with a trusty timepiece by Omega. By **Rishna Shah**

Everyone knows that Ian Fleming's iconic character James Bond and Miss Moneypenny (secretary to his superior, M) have impeccable taste. From their cars to their cocktails, only the finest will do. And their watches are no exception. It's no secret that the secret agent favours Swiss timekeeper Omega to aide him on his missions, with a partnership that began 25 years ago, and which includes the most recent film, *No Time To Die*. For the role of Moneypenny in the movie, Naomie Harris picks Omega's 'De Ville Prestige' watch with a hunter green leather strap and 27.4mm dial. The 45-year-old star is no stranger to the brand both on and off-screen, buckling up Omega timepieces for prior roles in *Skyfall* (2012) and *Spectre* (2015) and for several red-carpet appearances in the past decade. *Vogue* India spends time chatting with the British actor.

Rishna Shah: Which was your first Omega on-screen?
NH: The 'Seamaster Aqua Terra 150M' in steel, with a grey dial, for *Skyfall*. It had a beautiful pattern, like the deck of a luxury sailboat. I still have it and I wear it often.

RS: And your first Omega on the red carpet?
NH: For the premiere of *Spectre*, the Omega team pulled a watch out of the museum in Zurich for me to wear. It was a diamond-encrusted vintage watch, which paired stunningly with my dress, a bright orange Stella McCartney.

RS: Your favourite Bond scene?
NH: I always remember the shaving scene in *Skyfall*. It was my first intimate scene with Daniel Craig, where we got to play off each other. Daniel was so brave to let me shave him multiple times with a cut-throat razor.

RS: What makes Miss Moneypenny so fabulous?
NH: I love so many of Moneypenny's qualities—her resourcefulness, efficiency, quick wit, playfulness and intelligence. But if I had to choose just one I admire above all others, it would be her self-awareness. She knows who she is. It makes her invaluable as an MI6 employee and as a loyal friend to James Bond.

RS: A moment in time you would want to go back to?
NH: I'm not someone who spends a lot of time thinking about the past. I'm more focused on the present and the future. However, if I could turn back the hands of time, I'd go back to any time my grandfather was still alive and make sure he fully heard me about how loved he is by me and by our entire family.

RS: And a moment in the future you would wish to jump to?
NH: To a time when I've finally found a place in the world that feels like home. I love exploring the world, so I'm still searching for a place where I'd like to spend the rest of my life. But as I haven't found that country or place yet, I'd love to fast-forward time to see where that it is and move there. ■

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2020 was a year for wellness and self-care across the globe. For Kalki Koechlin, it was also the year she had to tackle the challenges of becoming a new mum in a pandemic, having given birth to her baby girl with her partner, the Israeli classical pianist Guy Hershberg, in February, a month before the nationwide lockdown was announced in India. “Being alone, figuring out breastfeeding, sleep-training, how to read my baby’s signs of sickness, or just having company, friends and family for support—none of that was available to me. On the other hand, Guy and I got a full year to dedicate (and not have to go to work) to our girl and watch her grow, which was amazing,” says Koechlin. “My biggest learning? Society isn’t prepared for raising children. Community living is so important to share the invisible workload.”

Not one to be bogged down, the actor used her time in isolation (when free from baby duties) to document her motherhood journey. *Elephant In The Womb*, her debut book, illustrated by Valeriya Polyanychko and published by Penguin, released last month. “Writing this book was a form of therapy, to journal through the struggles. I realised how much is not being said, that there’s this secret life of mummyhood that people ought to know more about,” says Koechlin, as she takes us through her beauty, style and wellness regimen.

HER BEAUTY PHILOSOPHY

“Nothing is more beautiful than a person having a good time. You have to find ways to have a good time. Personally, I never leave the house without mascara or motivation.”

IN HER VANITY CASE

“I love the brown mascara from Nocibé. My other favourites are Ruby’s Organics Bare lipstick, Gulnare’s toner and Natuur’s under-eye gel with almond and carrot seed oil. The day and night creams from The Moms Co. are working great for my skin too, and I’m sticking with them.”

A HOME REMEDY SHE SWEARS BY

“I like to rub leftover papaya skin on my face. The results are amazing.”

HER INSTANT-GLAM TIP

“Tie damp hair into two space buns for the day and have a gorgeous soft curl for the evening out. For great hair, I recommend the hemp and argan oil from Satliva.”

ON HER PREGNANCY RITUALS

“Every phase had its challenges. Phase one was rest and meditate, phase two was to get some exercise—even though it seemed impossible—and the third was just prayers that everything will go alright. For more details, you’ll have to read my comic book.”

ON HER FITNESS ROUTINE

“My spine is misaligned due to a horse-riding accident I had when I was a teen, so swimming works best for me as it is gentle as well as sculpting. I swam throughout my pregnancy as well. My favourite trainer is Maya Sarao, though these days she’s extremely busy as she’s also a great actor.”

ON HER PREGNANCY DIET

“I didn’t follow a special diet. While I had a lot of fresh green salad, spinach and green beans, I also started eating red meat even though I had been a vegetarian for three years prior. Avocado, chicken and guava helped ease the nausea in the first trimester. In the second and third trimesters, I had a particularly strong craving for grapefruit. In my weak moments, I would gorge on Cadbury’s Nutties and mutton biryani.”

ON HER INDULGENCES

“I love the deep-tissue massage and the foot massage at Sukho Thai. If you are in Goa, you need to look for a masseur called Danny Tsatsashvili. He’s an absolute miracle worker. I like to unwind after a hectic day dancing with Sappho [her daughter] with a record player on, or lie on a couch and watch something not too difficult but not too stupid either, like *White Lotus*. When it comes to food, Bengali cuisine is my absolute favourite.”

ON HER FAVOURITE SCENTS

“Laboratoires Senteurs’s 1409 eau de cologne for the day, Maroma Moroccan Lavender for nights out and Nina Ricci’s L’Air du Temps for special occasions—I grew up enjoying my mum’s French perfumes.”

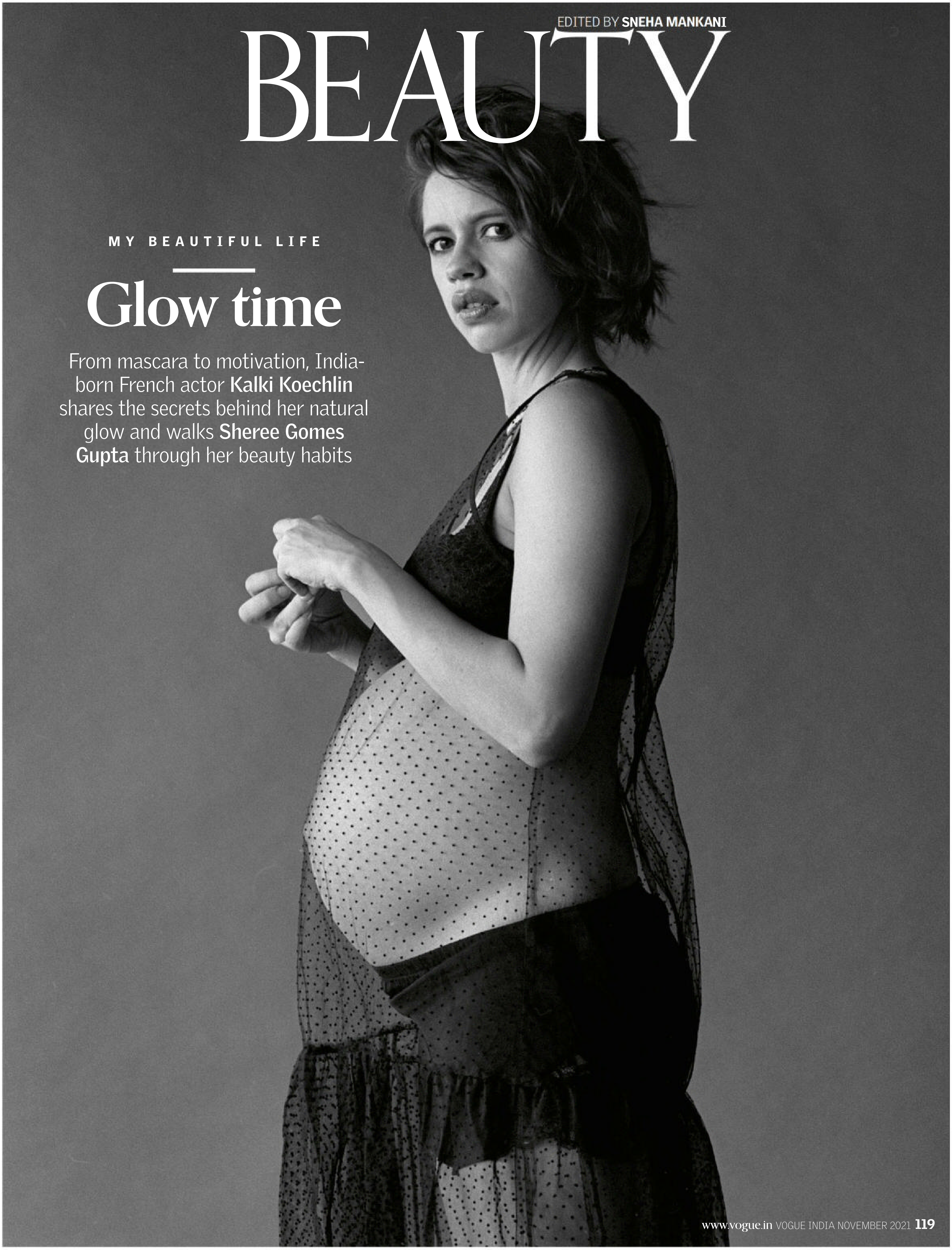
BEAUTY INSPIRATIONS

“Twiggy, Sharmila Tagore, Audrey Hepburn, Jean Seberg, Brigitte Bardot, Arundhati Roy, Ruchika Sachdeva, Ekta Rajani and Rema Choudhary.” ■

YASH YERI

EDITED BY **SNEHA MANKANI**

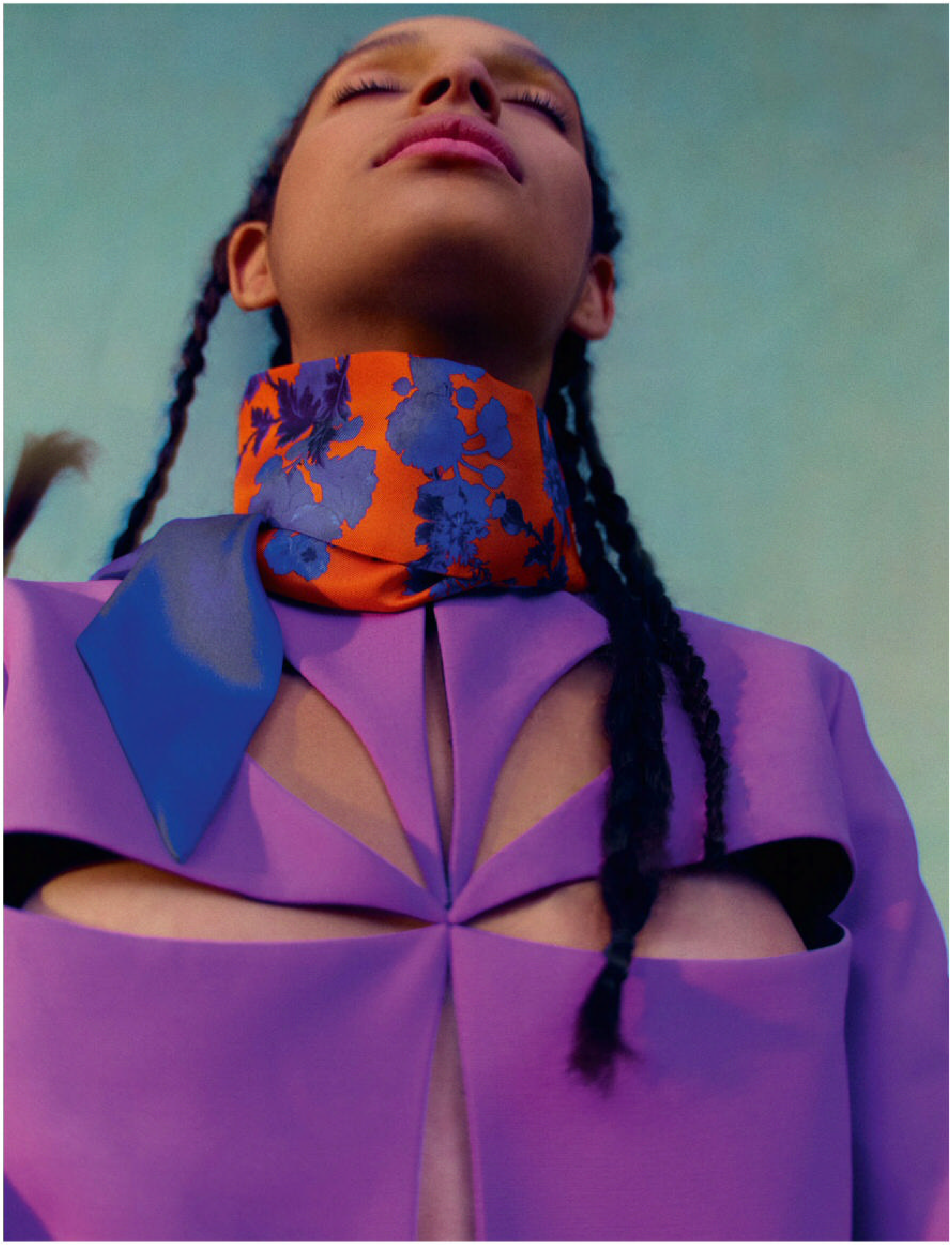
BEAUTY



MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE

Glow time

From mascara to motivation, India-born French actor **Kalki Koechlin** shares the secrets behind her natural glow and walks **Sheree Gomes Gupta** through her beauty habits



Snap out of it

A mental reset is more than just an alternative perspective. It might just change your life spectacularly. By **Rituparna Som**

PETROS

Our brain is constantly rewiring itself through experience and habit. It's how we learn new skills. It's also how we cope, especially when we feel cornered, stagnant or overwhelmed. A mental reset hands power back to us. Instead of being a victim to circumstances beyond our control, we decide our own trajectory.

Your mindset is a series of tiny acts that lead to small, and eventually big, beliefs that build on one another. When faced with challenges, these acts and beliefs can go askew, so you feel anxious, bitter, frustrated and angry. If you're used to self-introspection, you're already employing the tools of a mental reset to get back on track. And that doesn't mean being a happy, ridiculously optimistic person. Back on track means experiencing life's ups and downs with temperance, without getting overwhelmed by either.

A mental reset is the first step towards it. Those who are more seriously affected by anxiety or depression, or more nuanced mental health issues, need more than just a reset. But it's still the first step. "A reset is learning to shift and make new changes," says New York-based therapist, mental health educator, writer and wellness coach Minaa B. "It is rooted in adapting, as well as learning when to let go, start over, or create meaningful changes to better yourself for moving forward."

Minaa's Instagram feed is a powerhouse of guides to mental well-being. Her listicle-style posts invite you to go into uncomfortable places within yourself with compassion. Challenging times are a guarantee, recently exacerbated by a pandemic and loss. But life doesn't need to be challenging to want to evolve into your next phase. Minaa tells us how to reset our minds in order to take better care of ourselves.

A CHANGE IN YOUR PERSPECTIVE

"Our perspective plays a huge role in how we change our behaviour," explains Minaa. We build ourselves based on other people's opinions and on our own. But these are one-dimensional and are not written in stone. You might appear stubborn but you can always change. You might be called selfish but you can change. Change really is all you can depend on. It's not easy, but when tackled in small steps, it's exponentially beneficial.

It can be as simple as taking a short walk instead of sitting at your desk. Other times, it's a more intense process of asking yourself difficult questions. And being kind and patient as you unravel decades of learned behaviour. These coping mechanisms might have helped you get where you are currently but are now holding you back. It's not a pretty or easy process, but the person who emerges is ready to live life in every multicoloured possibility.

STEP 1: FEEL AND THINK

Sit quietly, breathe in and out, and examine your feelings—are you hot, cold, sad, happy, angry? Google a 'feelings wheel' to help. The challenge is to separate your 'feelings' from your 'thoughts'—what you're physically feeling versus what you're thinking. Maintaining a 'feelings journal' helps. And remember, thoughts are not 'facts' and feelings are just emotions. Thoughts lie and feelings pass.

> "Be in nature, hike, be near a lake. Breathwork is great for grounding and decluttering both physical and digital spaces"
>
> —MINAA B

STEP 2: LET GO

"It's about learning to move forward, even if that means without a person or a particular ideology," explains Minaa. "It happens gradually. Sometimes, the biggest difficulty when doing this is grief because letting go of what is familiar is hard. I encourage people to give themselves permission to grieve and feel their pain. There is no way to bypass doing hard things. Engage in self-soothing practices like journalling, therapy, writing exercises or breathwork."

STEP 3: REDEFINE PRODUCTIVITY

"There is nothing wrong with being productive. It becomes an issue when it leads to burnout and impacts your mental health," says Minaa. "We have to set limits and listen to our bodies to know when it's time to see resetting as a form of productivity within itself." Perhaps what you 'produce' at the end of your 'activity' is not a garden but a little lift of your heart when you see a new green leaf on the plant you thought you killed. Minaa recommends: "Be in nature, hike, visit a garden or be near a lake. Breathwork is great for grounding and for decluttering both physical and digital spaces."

STEP 4: CHECK YOUR RESOURCES

A reset can be an emotionally draining experience. Take the help of a counsellor, therapist, friends and family. If you're looking for resources, don't doomscroll #mentalhealth. Concentrate on the professional accounts. "Be mindful of who is sharing the information," says Minaa. "Lived experience and education are not the same thing, so it's important to know if the person running the account actually has credentials as well as offline experience. Social media is not a replacement for therapy. If you are struggling with your mental health, it's important to work with someone offline. If there are barriers, use other avenues such as books, conferences and TED talks."

STEP 5: MAINTAIN THE HIGH

So you've hit reset, gone through the grind and emerged wide-eyed and ready for round two. Remember, this is a long game. There will be future resets. Some minute, some not. Keep checking in with yourself. "I reset by paying attention to my habits and finding new ways to form new ones and implement them gradually," says Minaa. "I give myself permission to mess up along the way. Sometimes we make mistakes while on the road to getting things done." ■

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Self-love letters

How do I love me? Let me count the ways. By **Avanti Dalal**

For many people, the concept of self-love might conjure up images of cheesy self-help books or new-age fads. For some it may look like expensive candles, over-the-top spa retreats and fancy gym memberships. For others it may mean wearing a swimsuit on the beach, declining invitations to go out, or quitting a toxic job. But self-love is actually an overarching concept that includes all of these things: self-acceptance, self-compassion, self-forgiveness, self-respect, self-empathy and self-care, each important in the world we live in today.

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

"Self love is being in a state of appreciation for oneself while we mindfully practise actions that support our psychological, physical and spiritual growth," says Los Angeles-based Dr Deepika Chopra, an optimism doctor, happiness researcher and founder of Things Are Looking Up. "There is a strong connection between self-love and self-esteem. Deciding that you are valuable and worthy enough yourself to take actions to support your own growth, helps to increase happiness," she says.

Self-love can help push you to seek solutions and work through struggles, which helps to build resiliency. "Self-compassion and self-love make us feel a sense of self-efficacy. The belief in ourselves to be able to face challenges head-on can make us feel optimistic to deal with the curveballs life throws at us. Through increasing self-efficacy, people who practise self-love know and believe that things can change for the better—and that they have control over changing things in their lives no matter what the situation is externally," confirms Aanandita Vaghani, a Mumbai-based cognitive behavioural therapist.

ME, MYSELF AND I

A person who practises self-love is likely to have high self-esteem. They're comfortable anywhere they're placed, they post photos that promise them a bucket-load of likes, they're self-assured, are never wrong, always seem to have the right answers and are always the most attractive people in the room. But could you be mistaking these characteristics for narcissism—and could it be entitlement, exhibitionism and arrogance instead? The pros say that there's a fine line.

Once you could post photos to Instagram, you had the impulse to straighten your nose, whiten your teeth and lift your cheekbones with a few clicks in an effort to get more likes, comments, shares and validation from people. This made you feel happier, stronger and better. But did it really? "There's so much of society that we have had to battle over the years—gender and beauty norms, pressure from cultural hierarchy—so being able to care for who you are without looking at yourself through the lens of society is powerful," says psychologist Tanya Percy Vasunia. It's when society gets into the picture that things can get complicated. "The line is when you can no longer reflect or look at yourself. It converts from 'I love myself' into 'I'm the best', which is when insight and self-reflection decreases and you start flirting with narcissism," she says.

BEING YOU

Paradoxically, social media can be a medium for both self-love and self-hate. It is only natural we feel the need to be self-validated by likes and positive reinforcement from them. After all, it is our human need to belong, as when we feel we belong, we feel loved. But at the same time, depending exclusively on social media for self- love can be toxic. "I think there is something to be said about cultivating a balance between having your self-concept emerge partially from what others think of you and partially from what you think about yourself," says Vaghani.

On the other hand, there's nothing wrong with actually posting that selfie from your European sojourn. "You are allowed to post your happy and sad moments on social media, and at the same time feel for someone who doesn't have the privilege of experiencing happiness in the same way. Empathy is knowing and feeling for people who might be going through a hard time and self-love is knowing that you can feel for someone, while at the same time realising that your needs are worthy of being met too," says Vaghani. ■

> "The belief in ourselves to be able to face challenges head-on can make us feel optimistic to deal with the curveballs life throws at us"
>
> — AANANDITA VAGHANI, COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPIST

MAZEN ABUSROUR

3 SIMPLE WAYS TO INDULGE IN SELF-LOVE

1) LEARN HOW TO TAKE A COMPLIMENT WITH GRACE

"Contrary to popular belief, this isn't narcissistic. It actually takes a lot of self-reflection," says Vasunia. Self-love means writing down things that people believe about you which you might not have even noticed, and saying them to yourself until you believe that they are true.

2) PRACTISE MINDFULNESS

"Being able to take the time, space and energy to really get to know yourself, your needs, thoughts, feelings, sense of purpose, triggers, pleasures, and so on, is a key component to self love," confirms Dr Chopra.

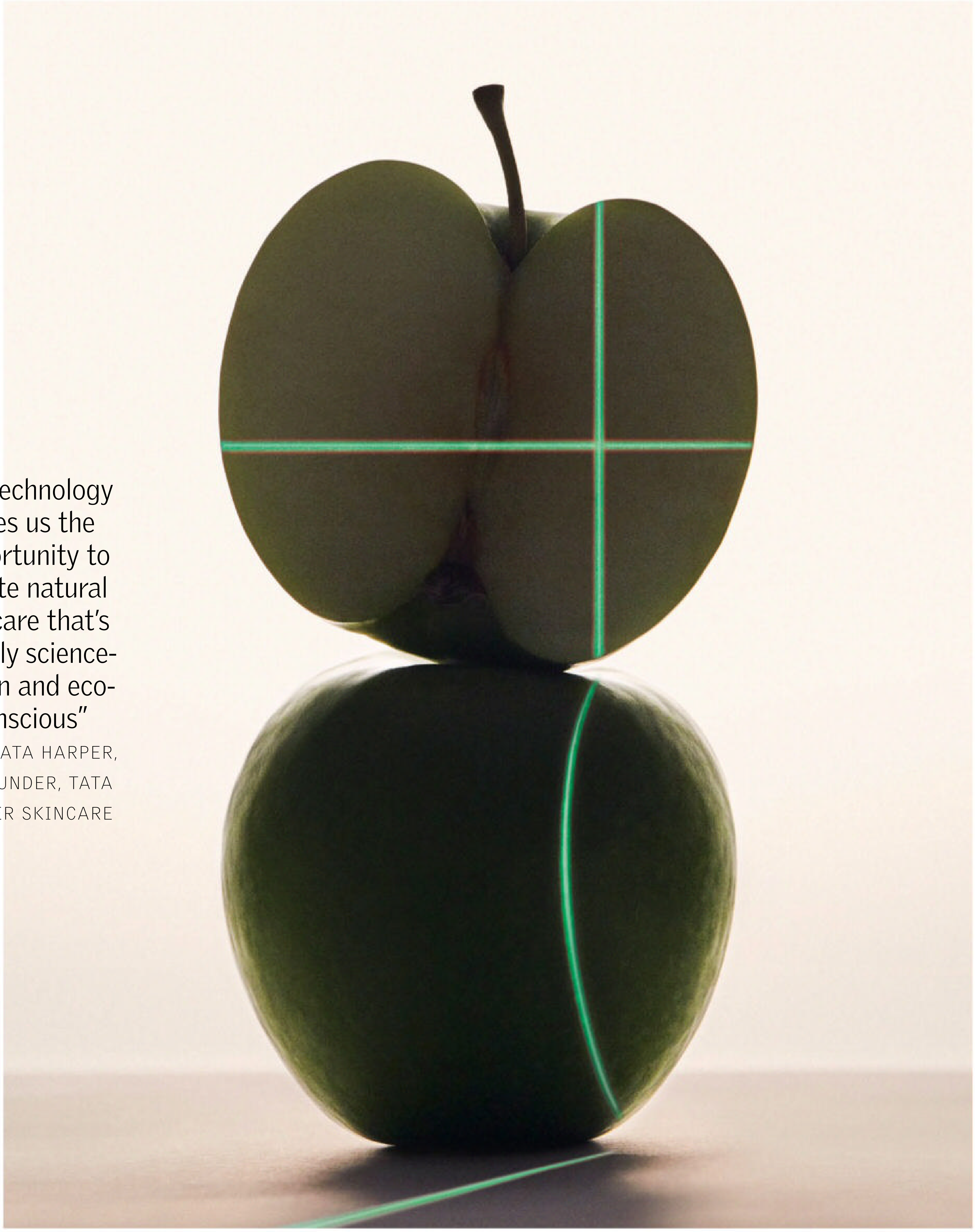
3) BE AWARE OF HOW YOU TALK TO YOURSELF

"It involves analysing our inner chatter and breaking it down to see what stories we are telling ourselves about events that are making us feel self-hate, and then knowing we have power to rewrite that narrative," says Vaghani.

The way forward

Biotechnology in beauty is bringing the industry closer to a sustainable future. **Anjan Sachar** discovers how

“Biotechnology gives us the opportunity to create natural skincare that’s equally science-driven and eco-conscious”
—TATA HARPER, CO-FOUNDER, TATA HARPER SKINCARE



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Ever so often, an ingredient, packaging innovation or formulation technology comes our way that promises a better path for the beauty industry to follow—like the comeback of biotechnology, the science of using living organisms to create formulations. Biotechnologically-engineered ingredients are formulated to work in an identical (if not more efficacious) manner to natural ingredients, bringing science and nature together in the best way possible.

"Biotech means ingredients that are manufactured in a laboratory using techniques that combine biological processes such as fermentation, and other scientific techniques," explains Dr Yannis Alexandrides MD FACS, an American and European board-certified plastic surgeon and the founder of celebrity-loved skincare brand 111Skin. "Some of these techniques include cold-pressing, steam distillation and solvent extraction. Others may include the production of ingredients by bacteria in a process similar to fermentation." However, do biotech ingredients meet the high quality and efficacy standards the industry demands today? Experts and brands the world over think so.

SUSTAINABILITY AT ITS BEST

"Today, 70 per cent of ingredient sourcing in this industry is unsustainable," says Jasmina Aganovic, chemical and biological engineer and entrepreneur-in-residence, Ginkgo Bioworks, a Boston-based biotech company. "The demand for plant-based ingredients has placed further pressure on the sustainability objectives and growing transparency demands from consumers." Industrial engineer Tata Harper, co-founder of Tata Harper Skincare, adds, "Biotechnology is different because it combines biology and chemistry to create active ingredients in a pure, responsible way. To engineer and recreate these natural ingredients in a lab, you only need a few samples of a plant or algae, so you're able to preserve the ingredients' place in nature. With biotechnology, there's no need to compromise sustainability for efficacy—it gives us the opportunity to create natural skincare that's equally science-driven and eco-conscious."

CONTROL OVER INGREDIENT DELIVERY

Biotechnology allows chemists to formulate ingredients in multiple concentrations and molecular weights, giving them control over ingredient performance. "These ingredients can be scientifically modified, so the molecular size can be adjusted to increase penetration or compounds can be isolated to target specific types of cells, enzymes, and proteins in the skin," says Harper. The brand's Concentrated Brightening Serum contains a bioengineered ingredient formulated to create a targeted delivery system. "It's a blend of microalgae fractions that are encapsulated in liposomes. We've created a smart melanin modulation system that only affects the stimulated receptors, so it's able to reduce the look of dark spots while preserving the skin's natural tone," she adds.

OPTIMUM USAGE OF NATURE AND SCIENCE

"Biotechnology provides the benefit of either refining ingredients to meet exacting performance standards, or taking plant or flower parts from nature and isolating components or bioengineering them to maximise efficiency for hair," explains Marc Reiner, cosmetic chemist at haircare brand Virtue Labs. "By harnessing the use of biotech, we can recreate specific ingredients found in living organisms that can provide unrivalled results when used in beauty products," adds Dr Alexandrides. "The use of biotech technology in creating these active ingredients is cost-effective and generates a lower carbon footprint."

MINIMISED RELIANCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The beauty industry has been called out plenty of times for its far-from-ideal production processes and use of natural resources. Biotechnology can help solve some of these concerns. "Biotech ingredients overcome obstacles in ingredient sourcing, such as limited natural resources, plant species endangerment, overconsumption, crop and farming variability and carbon emissions," says a chemist at MAKE Beauty, a biotech-driven beauty brand. "This lab-centric approach to taking natural ingredients and creating biosynthetic, sustainable ingredients on a large scale helps reduce our environmental impact while enhancing the efficacy, potency and purity of our products."

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Amyris, the California-based market leader in biotechnology, supplies sustainable ingredients to every global beauty conglomerate you can think of—and has a roster of health and beauty brands of its own. To date, the 13 sustainable ingredients it has developed have been formulated in over 20,000 products, reaching 200 million consumers. "Amyris is leading the way in developing sustainable ingredients and leading by example, so we can drive scale with fermentation-based technology," says Caroline Hadfield, CEO of Rose Inc, the new beauty brand founded by Rosie Huntington-Whiteley under the Amyris umbrella. "One of our hero ingredients is Neossance® Squalane. Traditionally, beauty companies have harvested squalane from the livers of deep-sea sharks, which threatens the population and can have consequences for oceanic biodiversity. Amyris's approach to fermenting engineered yeast with responsibly sourced sugarcane enables its sustainable production on a commercial scale that is reliable, economical and higher-performing than traditional sources." ■

1
111SKIN
2
3
4
5
VIRTUE
6

1. 111SKIN Y Theorem Bio Cellulose Facial Mask, ₹10,200 **2. Biotique** Bio Berberry Hydrating Cleanser, ₹170 **3. Tata Harper** Concentrated Brightening Serum, ₹23,700 **4. Rose Inc** Softlight Luminous Hydrating Concealer, ₹2,300 **5. Virtue** Restorative Treatment Mask, ₹2,400 **6. Make Beauty** Serum Balm, ₹2,000

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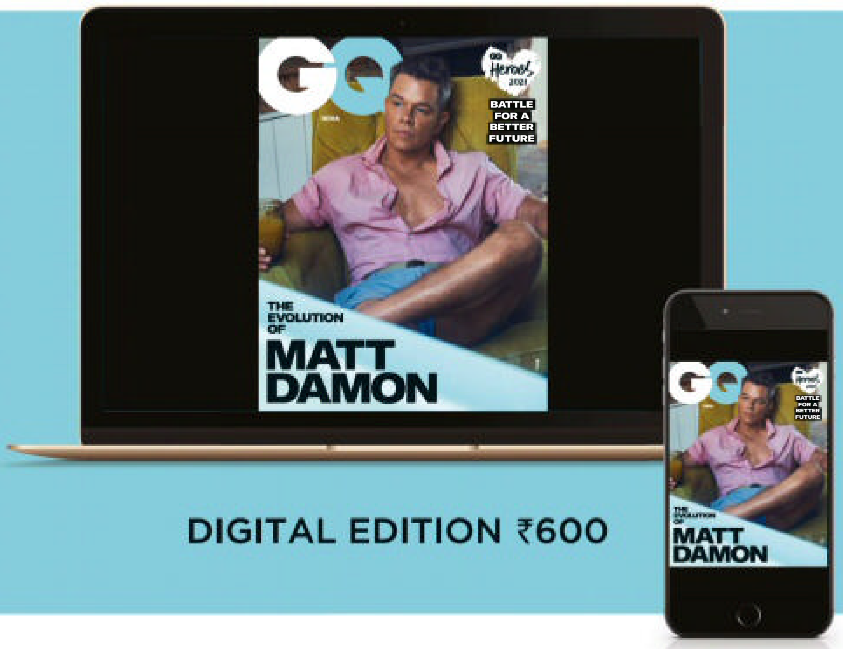
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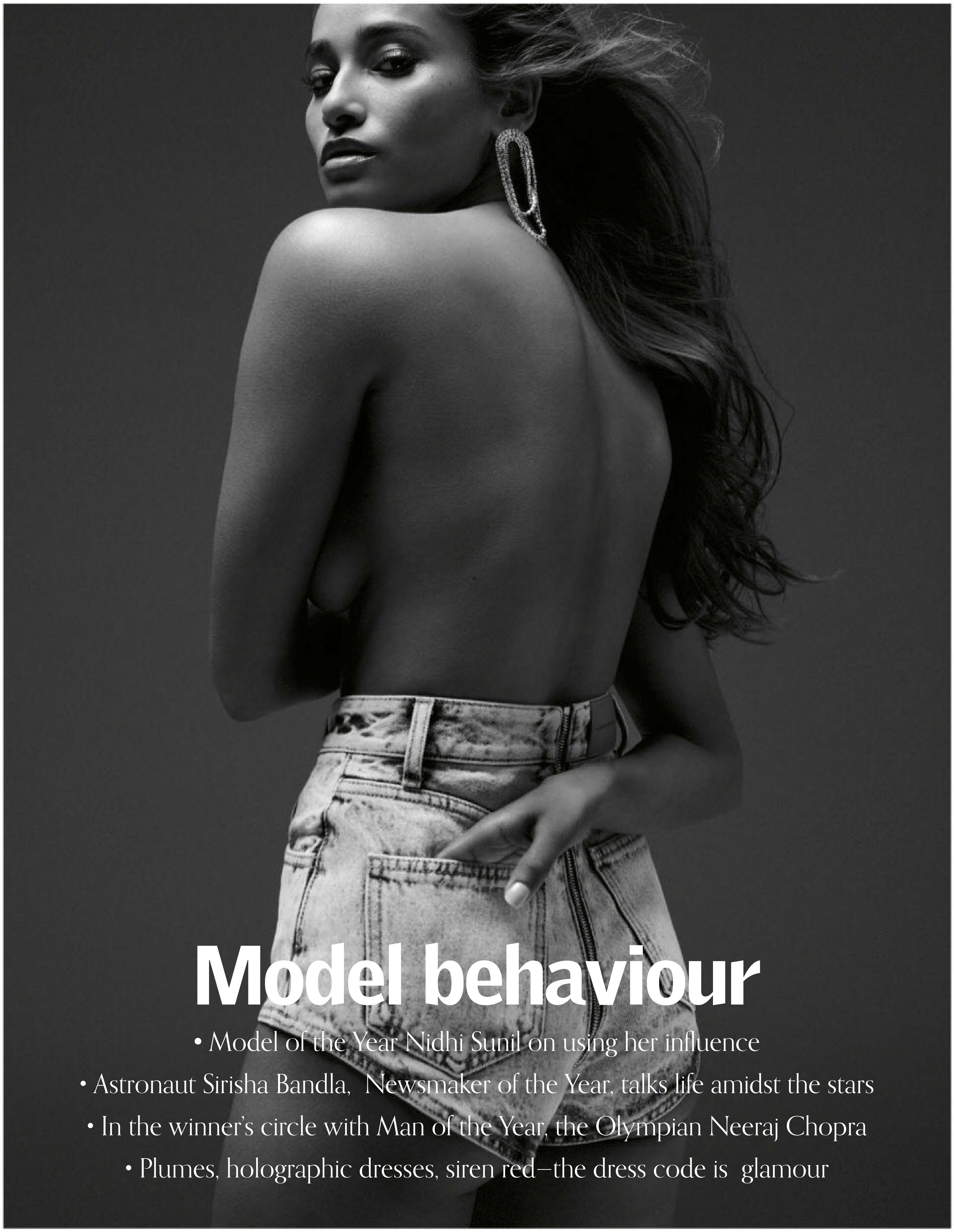


Model behaviour

- Model of the Year Nidhi Sunil on using her influence
- Astronaut Sirisha Bandla, Newsmaker of the Year, talks life amidst the stars
- In the winner's circle with Man of the Year, the Olympian Neeraj Chopra
- Plumes, holographic dresses, siren red—the dress code is glamour

PIERRE DEBUSSCHERE. DENIM SHORTS, ALESSANDRA RICH. EARRINGS, HELENE ZUBELDIA

Blouse shorts, belt;
all **Tom Ford**. Shoes,
Saint Laurent

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

MODEL OF THE YEAR

NIDHI SUNIL

Defying stereotypes while amplifying inclusivity, the model, activist, and all-round outspoken citizen of the world is turning the fashion industry upside down. As her career shifts into overdrive, the new face of change shares her navigation manual with **Avanti Dalal**

Photographed by **PIERRE DEBUSSCHERE** Styled by **PRIYANKA KAPADIA** Art direction **SNIGDHA KULKARNI**

Nidhi Sunil is everywhere you look. Switch on the television and she's selling you shampoo. Flip through a magazine and she's looking right at you, with her chiselled, sky-high cheekbones and sun-kissed strands. Scroll through Instagram and she's there, living her best life—travelling, working, working out and sharing snippets of how she's navigating it all. Yet in real life, she's as grounded as they come.

Only last month, Sunil was seen posing next to the Eiffel Tower, literally rubbing shoulders with pop star Camila Cabello, and standing tall near English actor Helen Mirren. But the model's palpable excitement had little to do with her august company and more to do with the achievement of becoming a face for many women who have previously been told that the colour of their skin isn't ideal.

After having faced colourism first-hand, the model-turned-activist—and now L'Oréal Paris's newest global ambassador (she is, in fact, the first Indian model to represent the brand globally)—is hell bent on turning things around for herself and for others in the fashion industry, making it known that her goal is for every single person to have agency regarding the way they look. "To have an opportunity to be a part of this conversation is humbling," says the model of the moment, who has also been a spokesperson for the Invisible Girl Project, an organisation that is fighting gendercide and infanticide.

Here, Sunil puts together her golden rules for modelling in 2021 and beyond.

FIND YOUR PLACE

"The modelling industry is in flux. It is changing to adapt, grow and expand in order to be a more inclusive space. Because of this, constant adaptability is required to make space for yourself. A manager can't create a personal brand for you if you haven't had the evolution to figure out what is for you. You have to build and create your own micro reality."

SPEAK OUT

"Social media has been a huge platform for young people who want to be models, as it gives them the agency and power to publish themselves without a third party. It took back what was happening in the early and mid 2000s, where a model was a nameless, voiceless clothes hanger. With social media, you have a voice."

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

"There is now a strong push towards representation and it is great to have new opportunities. Five years ago, they didn't exist for a person who looks like me. But for an aspiring model, I'd say that it is key to have a life outside of modelling so that you can look at things from a zoomed-out and expanded perspective, instead of having a one-track-mind." ■

Dress, earrings;
both **Dior**. Shoes,
Maison Ernest

Dress, shoes, bandana; all **Versace**. Earrings, **Begum Khan**

Top, **Jacquemus**. Skirt, **Orseund Iris**. Earrings, **Helene Zubeldia**

Top, skirt; both **Supriya Lele**. Earrings, **Persta**

Faux fur jacket, skirt,
earrings, necklace, shoes;
all **Saint Laurent**

Knit, tights; both
Fendi. Earrings,
Helene Zubeldia

Top, **Louis Vuitton**.
Earrings, **Persta**

Bodysuit, tights,
shoes; all **Saint Laurent**. Earrings,
Helene Zubeldia

Hair: Peter Gray/Home using Intelligent Beauty Global
Makeup: Adrien Pinault/M+A using Byredo
Photographer's agency: Art+Commerce
Photographer's assistants: Peter Keyser; Patricia Zheng
Assistant stylists: Naheed Driver; Manavi Dang
Production: Johanne Olessen/New Light Films
Digital technician: Stefano Poli/Digitart Paris
Visuals editor: Jay Modi
Entertainment director: Megha Mehta

Knit turtleneck
jumper, trousers; both
Ermenegildo Zegna

MAN OF THE YEAR

NEERAJ CHOPRA

This year, a quick throw transformed this village boy from obscurity into a phenomenon. But stardom falls lightly on his brawny shoulders—the javelin star's real victory is in seizing his Olympics win to turn his little-known sport into a focus for India, finds **Sharda Ugra**

Photographed by **BIKRAMJIT BOSE** Styled by **PRIYANKA KAPADIA** Art direction **SNIGDHA KULKARNI**

Jacket, **Hermès**

Ever since his Olympic gold medal, Neeraj Chopra has been seen everywhere. In cavalcades and on stages, alongside the mighty, amidst the throng of the commoner, on TV and video, responding to the sublime and the ridiculous. However dizzy the pedestal he's elevated onto, the more Chopra has shone—with his medal and his 1,000-megawatt grin, always with the reminder that he wants to be more than just that medal. "When I started competing internationally, I understood about Abhinav Bindraji… I realised that this—to win an Olympic gold—was a very unique thing for India. That only one person had won it," says Chopra, who is now only the second Indian to have clinched an individual Olympic gold in Tokyo.

He reassures me, "I'm the same person that I was." And continues, "Of course, it's good that people know and appreciate you, but what's bigger is that now everyone acknowledges my sport. Earlier you told them about it and still they wouldn't understand. Now everyone in India knows what a javelin is. I'm most happy about that." The delirious aftermath of Tokyo has also reminded him about the importance of protecting his sport and with it, himself. "*Javelin ke bina*," he says, "*mujhe lagta hai Neeraj hai hi nahin.*"

A STAR IS BORN

In an eight-and-a-half foot, 800gm streamlined carbon fibre flying object, Chopra has found a version of himself that no one would have dreamt of when his family stuck a 13-year-old on a bus heading out of Khandra—population 2,153 (2011 census)—towards a stadium in Panipat. He was heading there on the insistence of an uncle who wanted the chubby teenager to get fit. Yet of the many sports on offer at the stadium, it is as if the javelin found him. When the then novice tried out the javelin, his earliest coaches were taken aback at the ease of throw and flexibility of limb. It's as if the athlete inside Chopra was waiting to be set free by the javelin. "It is a part of me," he says. "It is attached to my name—javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is my *pehchaan*. I am connected to it." It's always been this way. Before the medals, the fame, this win.

Currently, it is athletics off-season, but in 2022, Chopra knows there's a target on his back at three big events—the World Athletic Championships (July), the Commonwealth Games (July-August) and the Asian Games (September). He also knows he must turn away his public face at some point. "Now people think that Neeraj *manaa nahi karta*, but I will have to refuse. They will feel bad, but I don't compromise on my training. I will fold my hands and say this cannot go on. If I do all this, then I will not be able to do anything more in my sport," says the javelin star about his plans to set aside the gold before it weighs his neck down. "I'm an athlete, my job is to work. It's not that my Olympic medal is everything and so I don't need to do more. People remember those who win multiple medals in Olympics." He invokes the pantheon of Usain Bolt and Michael Phelps, and wants to direct this thrill around Indian athletics towards giving millions of children access to what he didn't have. Chopra knows he must make use of his position to proselytise for Indian track and field.

Articulate and energetic, he prefers to speak in Hindi, peppering his speech with Haryanvi proverbs. He says his "biggest dream" for Indian boys and girls is more grounds, coaches at those grounds, and regular competitions. "If not a ground in every village, at least one close to them, shared by other villages. And with coaches to guide them. When I go to Europe, all age groups have 15 or 20 competitions a year in the season. Competitions allow children to know their progress. Otherwise you just train but don't know the direction you are taking."

A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN

Today, India's most-sought-after sports star wants to hold on to the private Neeraj—follow his love for photography, armed with a new Sony DSLR—and push back against social media narratives or having random shots fired from his shoulder. When faux outrage broke across hysterical news channels about Pakistani javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem using Chopra's javelin in practice before Chopra's first Olympic throw, he stepped up. On Twitter, Chopra appealed to his fans: "I'd request everyone not to use me and my comments as a medium to further your vested interests and propaganda. Sports teaches us to be together and united." Now an Instagram influencer, with over 4.9 million followers, he laughs, "I'm going to keep my shoulder safe, give it a rest. I need to use it to throw the javelin, remember. I don't *ghuso* into social media, but if I know I'm 100-per-cent right, I will speak up."

As Instagram tells us, before heading off for a vacation to Maldives, the last not-so-quiet thing Chopra did—apart from showing off wicked acting chops in the Cred ad, was to visit 'Bindraji' in Chandigarh. When Bindra found out Chopra was mad about dogs, he gifted him a puppy called Tokyo. The synchronicity is not just in the name. Pre-Olympics, Chopra had told Manisha Malhotra, head of sports excellence and scouting at JSW Sports, about the breed of dog he loved most—a golden retriever.

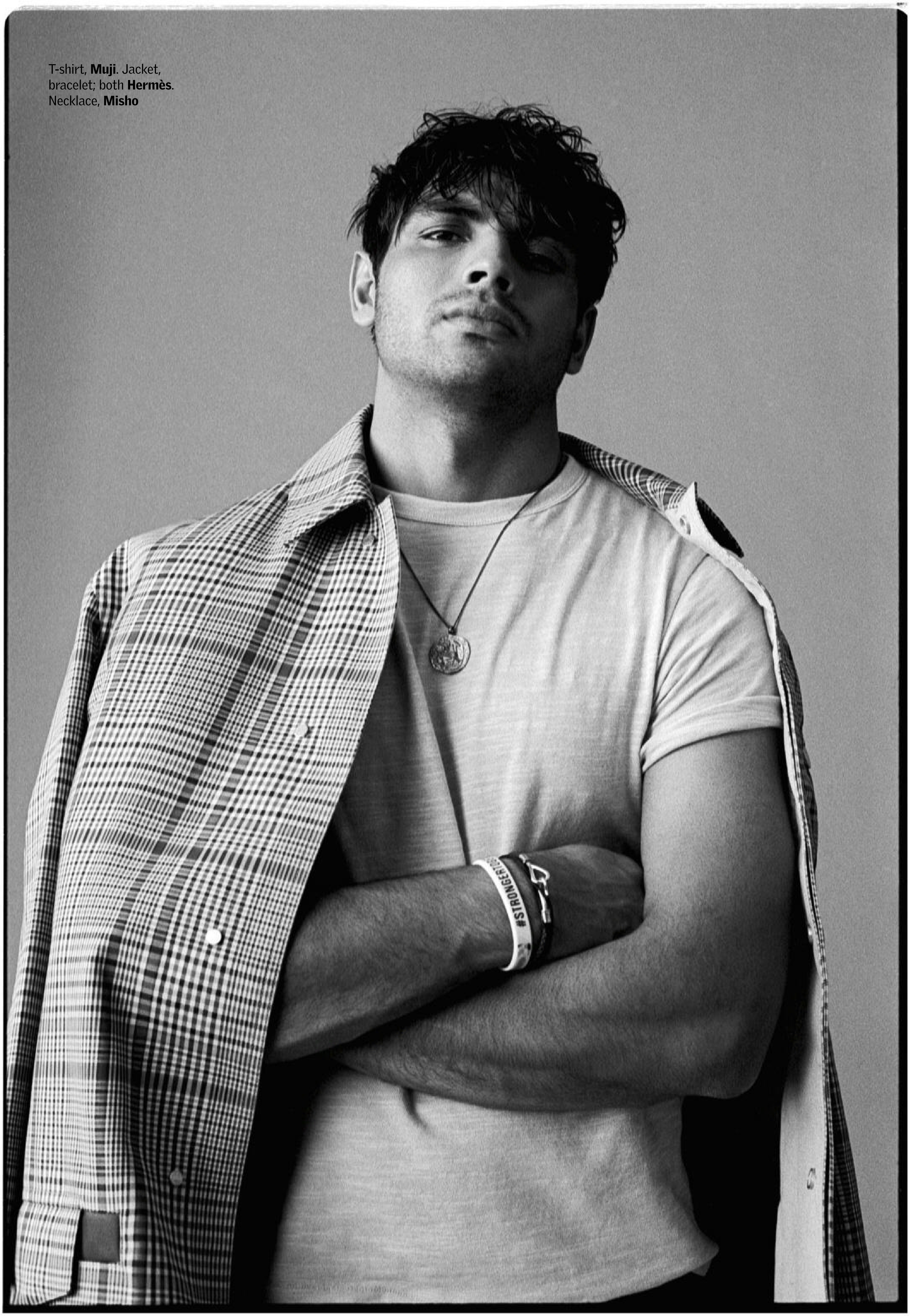
This is the first time *Vogue* India has featured a male athlete on its cover. Movie stars turn up occasionally, but before Chopra, no man from sport did. Not even cricketers. It's not as odd a merger as it appears. Well before the world knew him, Chopra followed his own style. He kept his hair long in school. While competing, it became—much to the horror of rural Haryana—a ponytail. "I was asked to cut it. 'Oh, it's so hot, cut it.' 'Oh you can't become an athlete with long hair, cut it.' I just kept it and they just got used to it."

When waiting for the bus home on the Panipat highway, he would often kill time by sifting through export cast-off tees piled onto bed sheets along the highway. "It was a dream that one day I'd be able to go into a Nike or Adidas store and buy their shoes and their clothes," says Chopra, who now has endorsement deals with everyone from online education behemoth Byju's to Tata AIA Life Insurance. He eagerly waits for his new sports gear, but adds that he "likes formals too, plus jeans with a leather or normal jacket".

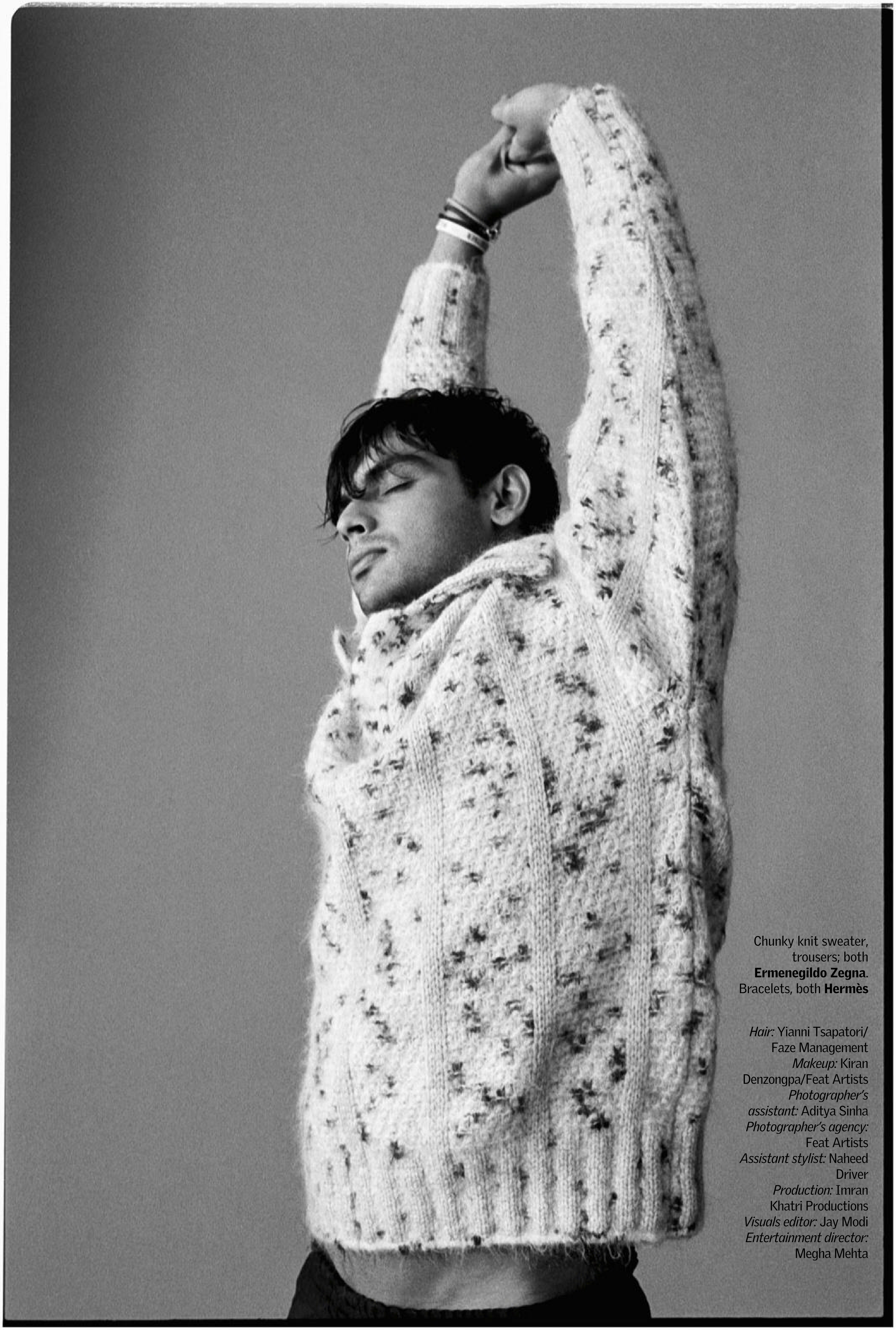
In 2016, at age 19, the Indian army signed him on its sports quota when its athletics saw a teenager hurl javelins close to the 80m mark at the National Institute for Sport in Patiala. His parents needed a bit of convincing, but Chopra was hooked. After all, his home state Haryana sends thousands into the armed forces every year, whose stories of valour are legend around its villages. "And who doesn't love the uniforms?" Chopra told an interviewer.

Personable and polite, Chopra has managed to stay humble even after his high-profile achievement. "I don't do things to show off. No way. I do it because I like it and feel good about it." These days, his hair is trimmed because it interferes with the sport, but he's got India hooked onto his style. That's what Olympic golds do—spotlight a Haryanvi village boy alongside high-fashion. But it's all really because of what the boy has done—stepped up in elite sport and made the world his village. ■

T-shirt, **Zara**



T-shirt, **Muji**. Jacket, bracelet; both **Hermès**. Necklace, **Misho**



Chunky knit sweater, trousers; both **Ermenegildo Zegna**. Bracelets, both **Hermès**

Hair: Yianni Tsapatori/ Faze Management
Makeup: Kiran Denzongpa/Feat Artists
Photographer's assistant: Aditya Sinha
Photographer's agency: Feat Artists
Assistant stylist: Naheed Driver
Production: Imran Khatri Productions
Visuals editor: Jay Modi
Entertainment director: Megha Mehta

NEWSMAKER OF THE YEAR

SIRISHA BANDLA

With one small step, this India-born rocket scientist made a giant leap for womankind. The astronaut opens up to **Megha Mahindru** about why commercial space travel is not just an expensive thrill but a gateway to a phenomenally inclusive future

Photographed by **BILLY KIDD** Styled by **PRIYANKA KAPADIA** Art direction **SNIGDHA KULKARNI**

Jacket, **Balmain**. Trousers, **Dorothée Schumacher** at **Ruth Shaw**. Antique crystal necklace, **Bijoux Baltimore**

Silk shirt, coat, lace biker shorts; all **Chanel**. Antique pearl ring, **Bijoux Baltimore**

Gown with built-in bodysuit, tights, belt, necklace; all **Atelier Versace**

Embellished dress,
Bottega Veneta

Embellished dress, boots; both **Dolce & Gabbana**

Hair and makeup: Lori Pressman/T.H.E Artist Agency
Photographer's assistant: Bradley Ennis
Photographer's agency: Walter Schupfer Management
Assistant stylists: Naheed Driver; Jennifer Hausner
Production: Gwendolyn Anderson
Digital tech: Olivia Wohlers
Fashion coordination: Pascale Lemaire/T.H.E Artist Agency
Visuals editor: Jay Modi
Entertainment director: Megha Mehta

For the foreseeable future, Sirisha Bandla is likely to have the same introduction that sets her apart in any room she inhabits: the girl who went to space. In July 2021, the aeronautical engineer was among the five passengers on the Unity 22 spaceflight, a historic feat—not only because Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic is the world's first fully crewed suborbital test flight, but also because Bandla, a girl from Andhra Pradesh, is only the second Indian-born woman to reach this far.

Bandla has a high-watt smile, beautiful curls and the earnest demeanour of the girl next door (who probably topped your class). But she insists she was never the straight-A prodigy you'd expect her to be. "I was one of those kids who could never stay focused on something," says the 34-year-old astronaut, dressed in a grey T-shirt as she joins me on Zoom from her home in Washington DC.

A Maria Qamar artwork with Hatecopy's sardonic humour looms over Bandla in the background—a subtle reminder of her desi upbringing—as she regales me with stories of her school days that came with diversions like cello lessons, horse riding, surfing and soccer. The only constant was a dream to reach the sky, fuelled by devouring paperbacks of Issac Asimov and binge-watching *Star Trek* during her formative years.

LAUNCH PAD

The daughter of immigrant parents, Bandla's microbiologist father moved to the US from Guntur in Andhra in 1991 for a PhD. Living on campus in Houston, the family would bond over air shows and visits to the nearby NASA Johnson Space Center. "We didn't have much money but I'd never know it because of the life my parents provided for me," notes the Chirala-born engineer. "They were always so encouraging. When I was obsessed with marine life, they took me to the aquarium. When I picked up the biggest and most expensive music instrument, they tried never to say no."

That the family raised not one but two women in STEM (Bandla's sister is a microbiologist working for the US Department of Agriculture in Maryland) is also an accomplishment that she credits solely to their unbiased upbringing.

Take male-dominated fields like aeronautics. So far, the industry has spurred less than 100 women to reach space, of which the stats for women of colour are even more dismal. When Bandla says it's "always felt like a very lonely path," she's not only referring to her engineering course at Purdue (where she was among a handful of girls of colour) but also to her childhood dream to be an astronaut, with no similar-looking role models but only "adrenaline seeking white men".

SOMEONE LIKE YOU

Now back from the edge of space, Bandla says that her biggest thrill wasn't munching on floating jelly beans as she did acrobatic manoeuvres in zero gravity, but how her journey to the outer layers impacted the others. "What's incredible is the number of messages I've got, especially from young women in India. It's interesting how much of a mental barrier there is for people when they see somebody they can't relate to, doing what they want," she says. "So for women to see themselves in me—either from a connection of where we grew up, how we look, or our culture—is powerful."

Growing up, her role model was the fictional Jean-Luc Picard, until she read about Kalpana Chawla. "I saw in her an exceptional Indian woman doing something I wanted to do. It made it so much more real," she says. Bandla was just 15 when Chawla, her hero, died as NASA's space shuttle exploded while re-entering the atmosphere. "I followed Kalpana's career through the internet, but it's hard when you don't have someone to talk to," she says of the prejudices faced by women of colour. "You start questioning yourself: 'Is it all in my head?' Those are the kind of microaggressions and hurdles that women of colour face. So having a network, having mentors, is really helpful," says the Purdue alumna, who is on her university's Young Professional Advisory Council.

Bandla didn't have it easy. But today, she represents the modern Indian pantheon of women who are breaking barriers in space exploration. There's Swati Mohan, the bindi-sporting scientist who became the global voice of the Mars 2020 mission; Bhavya Lal, the first Indian to be appointed NASA's acting chief of staff; closer home, Tessy Thomas, the first female scientist to head a missile project; ISRO's Ritu K Srivastava aka the 'rocket woman of India' and most recently, Sanjal Gavande, the Kalyan-born systems engineer at Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin. "That kind of representation reduces barriers for women very young. It shows them that it's something they can do," says Bandla, who plans to use her blue-ticked influence to mentor those interested in aeronautics.

DOWN TO EARTH

The internet remembers the day Bandla landed, with an image of her sitting atop Branson's shoulders, looking dapper in an ultramarine jumpsuit and throwing her hands skywards as if busting a bhangra move. "When I got off the space flight, the first person I hugged was my dad. He hugged me so tight that the sunglasses around my neck shattered," she says, adding that the broken pair is now a memento for her father. The effect of her stratospheric stardom was felt not only in her neighbourhood in DC—where she lives with her husband Sean Hu ("My ground support") and rescue dog, Chance the Yapper—but even 8,000 miles away in India, where her grandparents' home turned into a joyous circus for the media. "I told my grandparents not to release any baby pictures out into the world but they did not listen," she says with a laugh.

What makes Bandla's story even more poignant is that she had once almost given up on her 25-year-old dream when poor eyesight prevented her from becoming a NASA astronaut. Irrepressible, she took a different route, which led her to where she is today—Virgin Galactic's vice president of government affairs and research operations, where her role is "talking about utilising space for the betterment of life on earth as well as for technology, innovation and advancement in space." While space travel may conjure images of *The Jetsons* coming to life, Bandla's explorations are built on an ambitious new world. "With Virgin Galactic, we can make space available for so many people like me who weren't able to go through a traditional route," she says of her inclusive space vision that looks beyond engineers, scientists and pilots. "Every time I'm asked to describe the view from space, I can't think of a word besides 'incredible'," she says. "But I cannot wait for artists, poets and communicators to go up because they'll definitely find a better way to communicate that to everyone." Her company recently announced a sweepstake with the non-profit Space For Humanity, which allows two citizens to win a seat to space for just US$10.

But as democratic a dream it seems on paper, for most of us, at $2,50,000 a seat, space tourism is no trip to Disneyland. It's a very pricey affair. And though Bandla's story may be the tailpiece of a bigger voyage—the quintessential American dream of a girl from India, literally reaching the sky—the complexities of space travel, condemned as a billionaire-rocketeer game in this age of global warming and a pandemic, are problematic. Bandla predicts my question as we scrutinise the millions spent by the Branson-Bezos-Musk trio on space endeavours, which could have instead brought, say, global vaccine equality. "Flying to space is an absolutely incredible experience, but there's also the opportunity to fly research experiments and payloads to space with students and researchers, which wasn't available to everybody in the past," she says, optimistic of the diversity of people who will soon be able to access space.

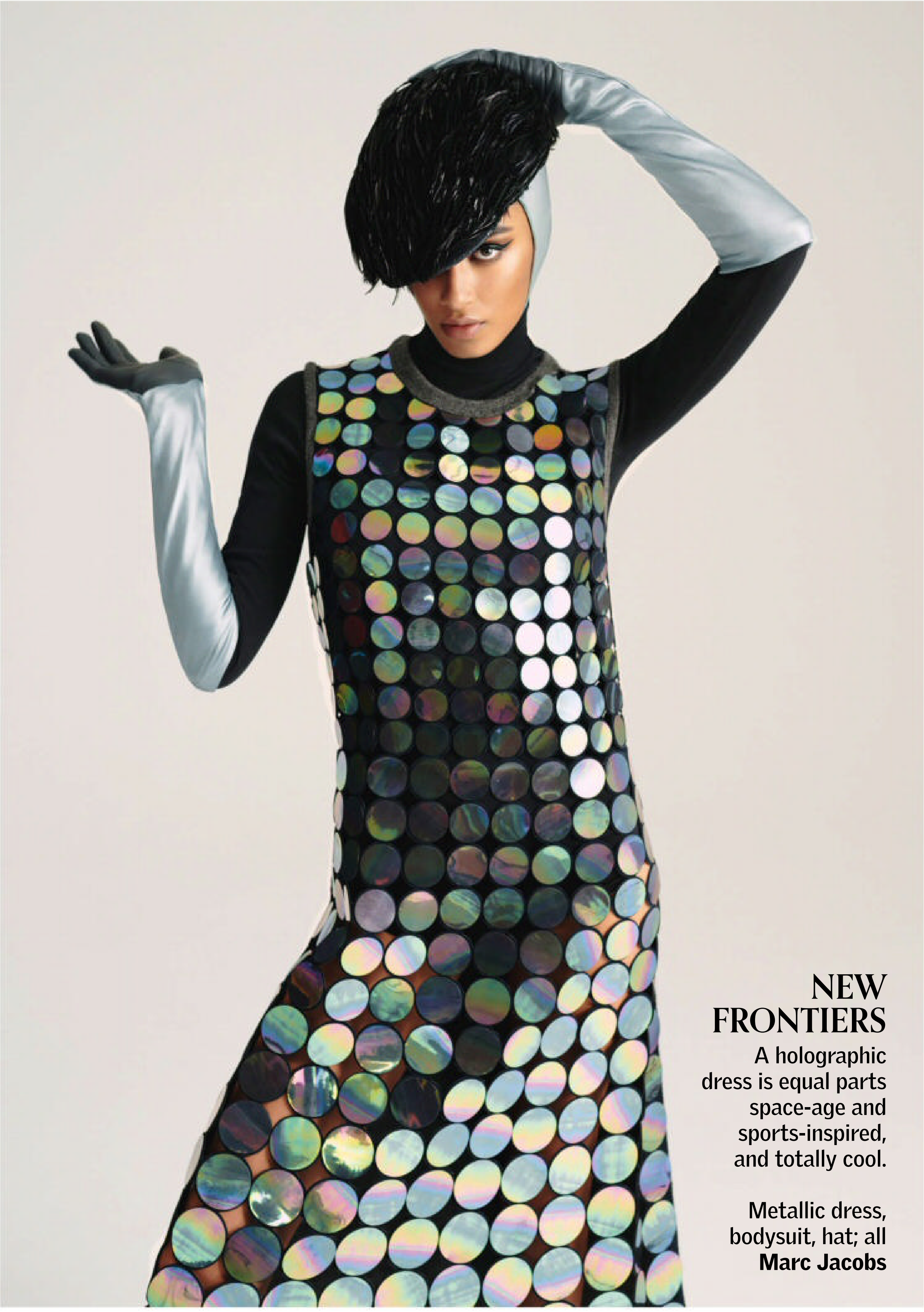
On July 11, Bandla aided a human tended research experiment when she flew with a payload analysing the gene expressions of plants called Arabidopsis in suborbital conditions. "Having done science on a spaceship, I can also talk about the elements of utilising space for the benefit of humankind—like, if there's a way we can utilise these plants to provide food security for areas that are being hit harder by climate change," she shares. Gravitated by the greater good, her orbital missions remain tethered to earth. "So it's not just space-based research, a lot of the research we do, in fact, looks at how we can protect our planet and make life better here." ■

FRILLS AND FANCY

Roaring into 2022 with a heavy dose of shimmy-worthy fringe.

Fringe dresses, **Loewe**

UP ALL NIGHT



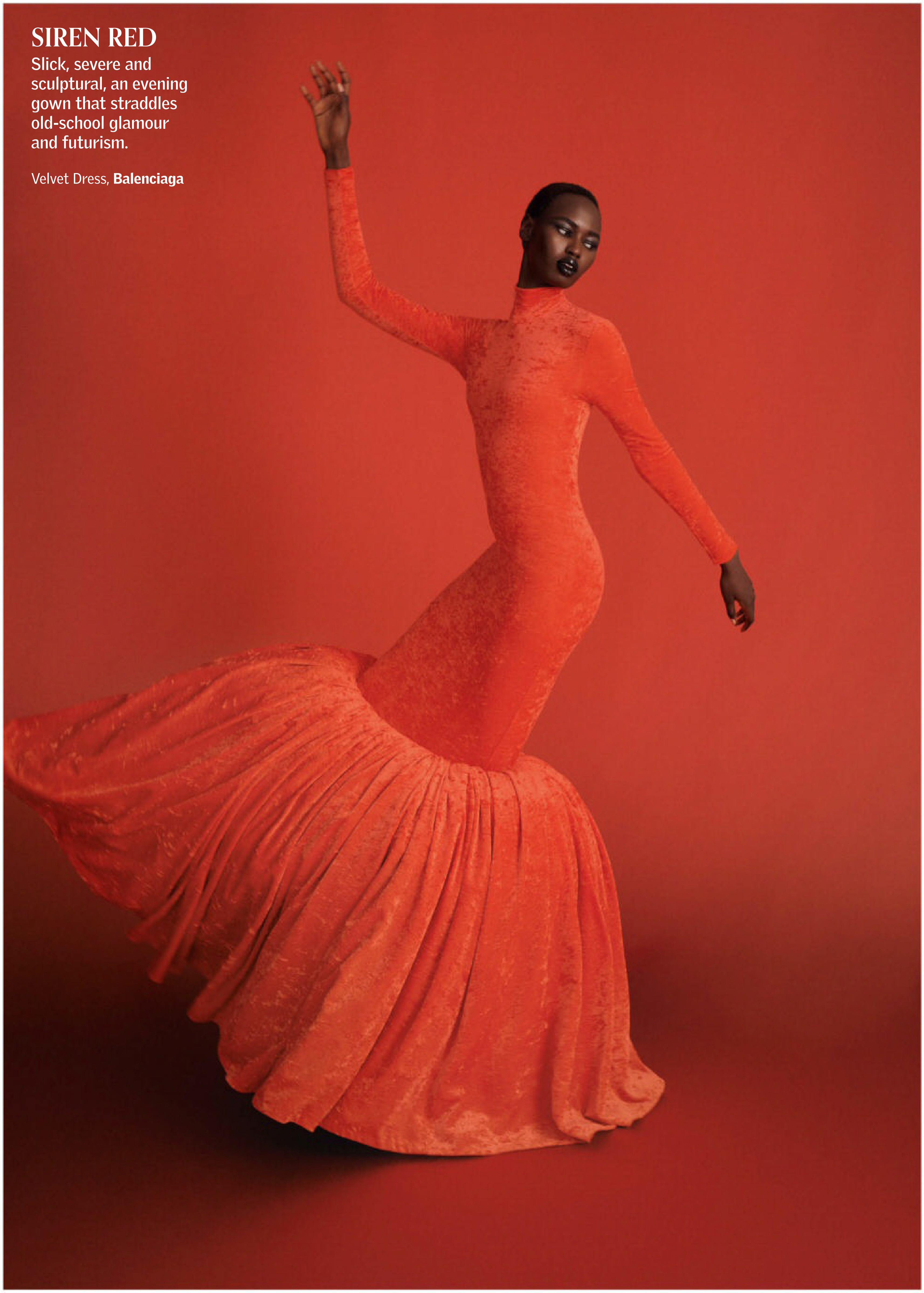
NEW FRONTIERS

A holographic dress is equal parts space-age and sports-inspired, and totally cool.

Metallic dress, bodysuit, hat; all **Marc Jacobs**

The dress code said glamorous. And when glamorous looks this good, no one wants the party to end

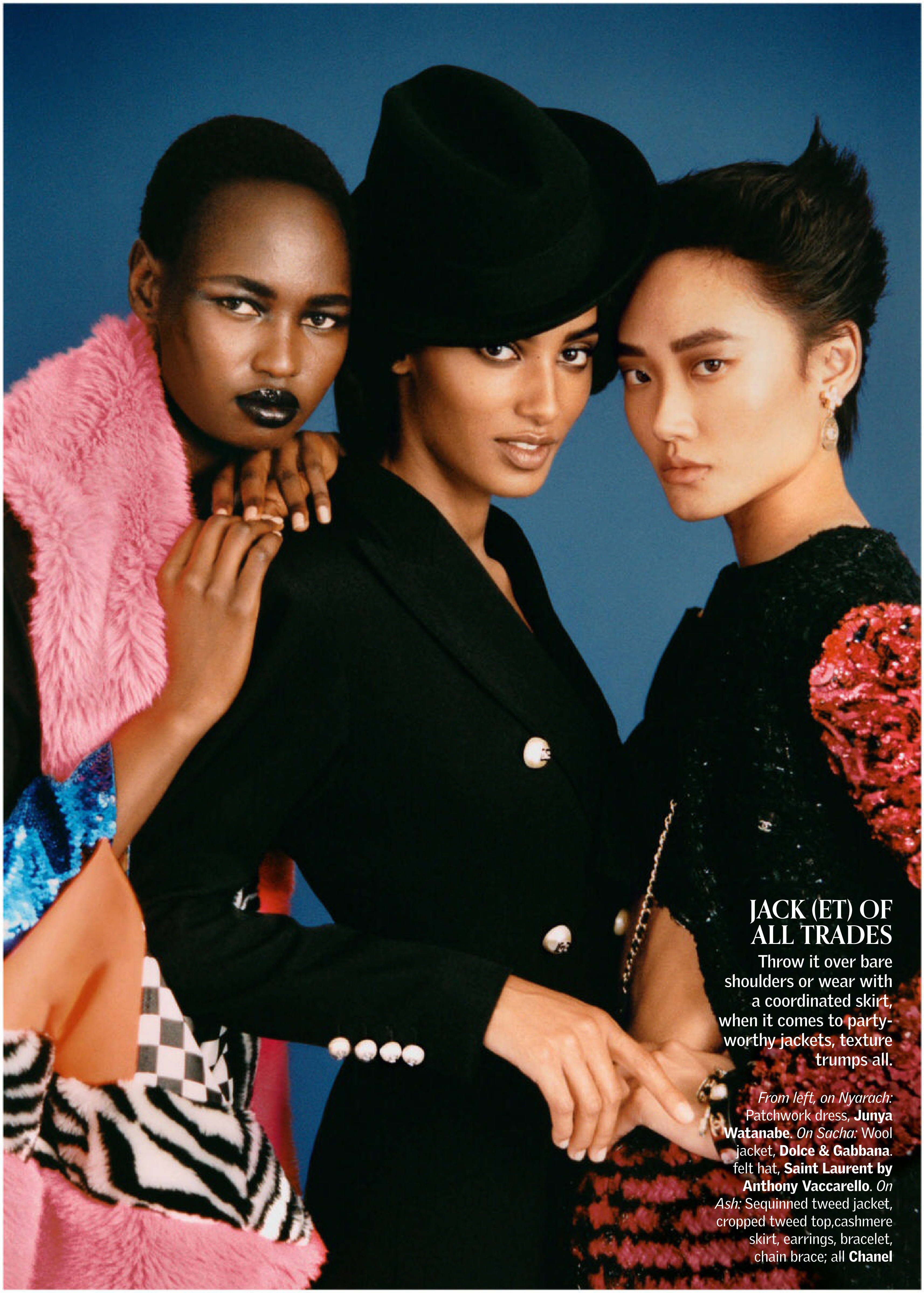
Photographed by **RASHARN AGYEMANG** Styled by **KATE PHELAN**



SIREN RED

Slick, severe and sculptural, an evening gown that straddles old-school glamour and futurism.

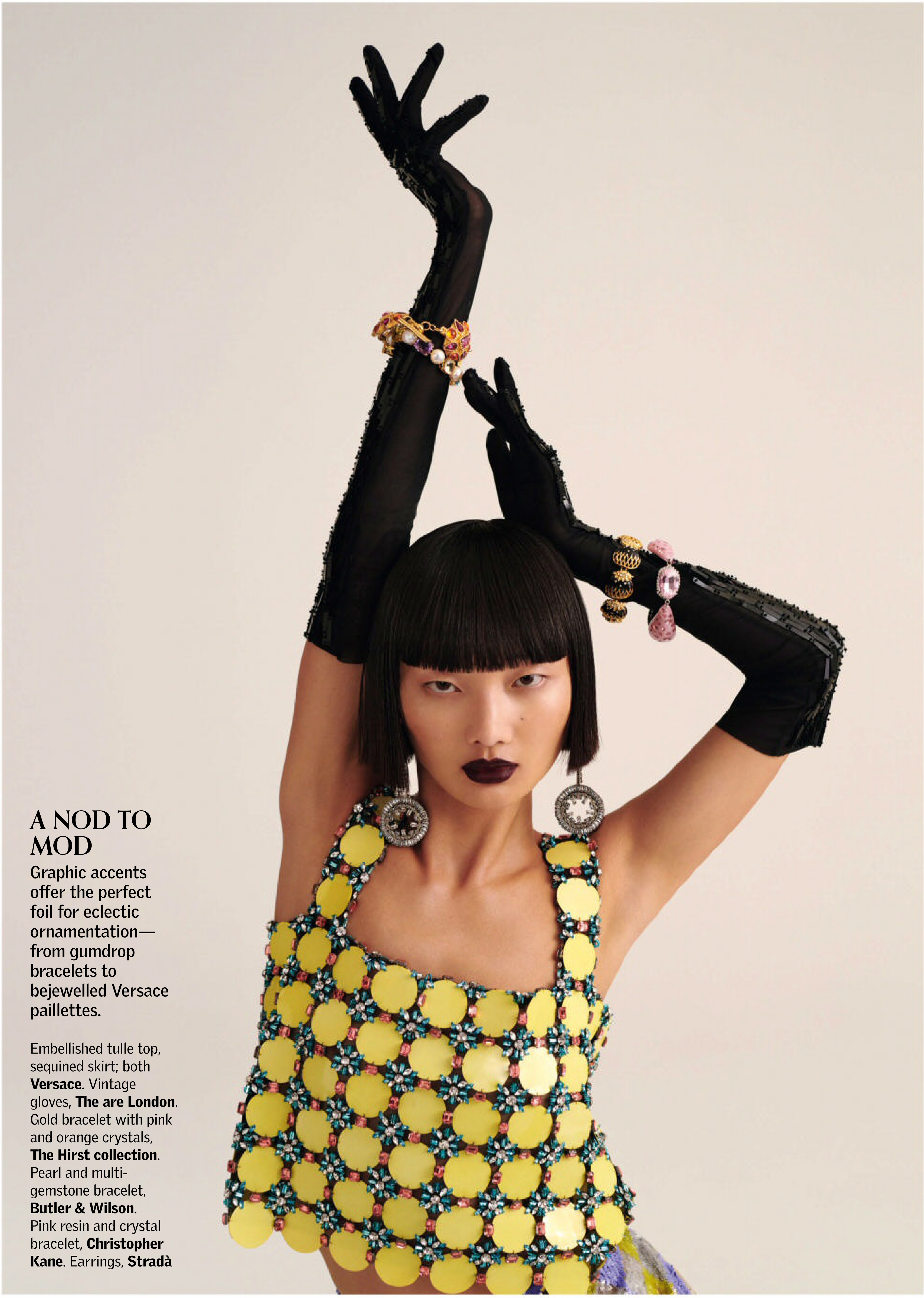
Velvet Dress, **Balenciaga**



JACK (ET) OF ALL TRADES

Throw it over bare shoulders or wear with a coordinated skirt, when it comes to party-worthy jackets, texture trumps all.

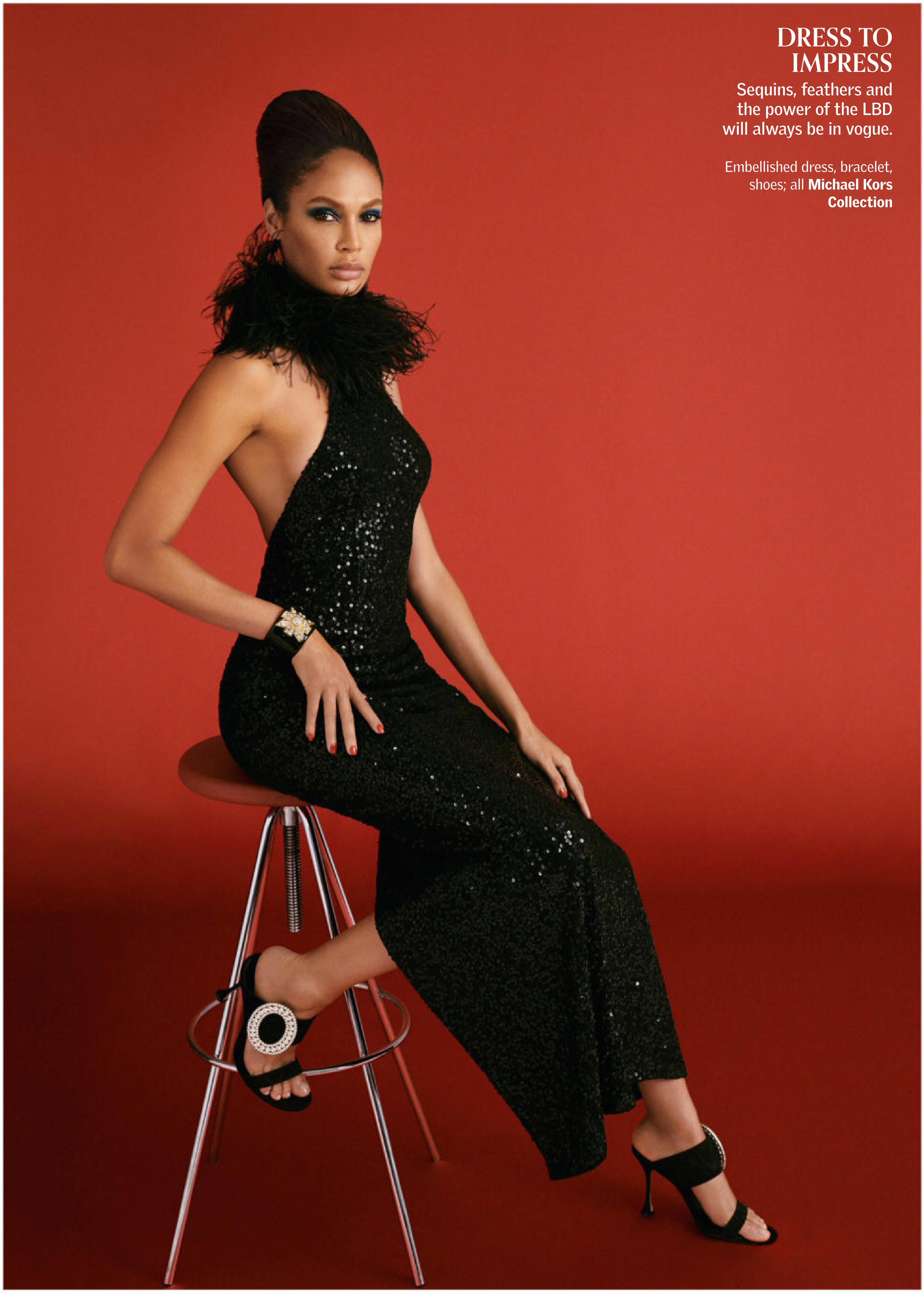
From left, on Nyarach: Patchwork dress, **Junya Watanabe**. *On Sacha:* Wool jacket, **Dolce & Gabbana**. felt hat, **Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello**. *On Ash:* Sequinned tweed jacket, cropped tweed top,cashmere skirt, earrings, bracelet, chain brace; all **Chanel**



A NOD TO MOD

Graphic accents offer the perfect foil for eclectic ornamentation—from gumdrop bracelets to bejewelled Versace paillettes.

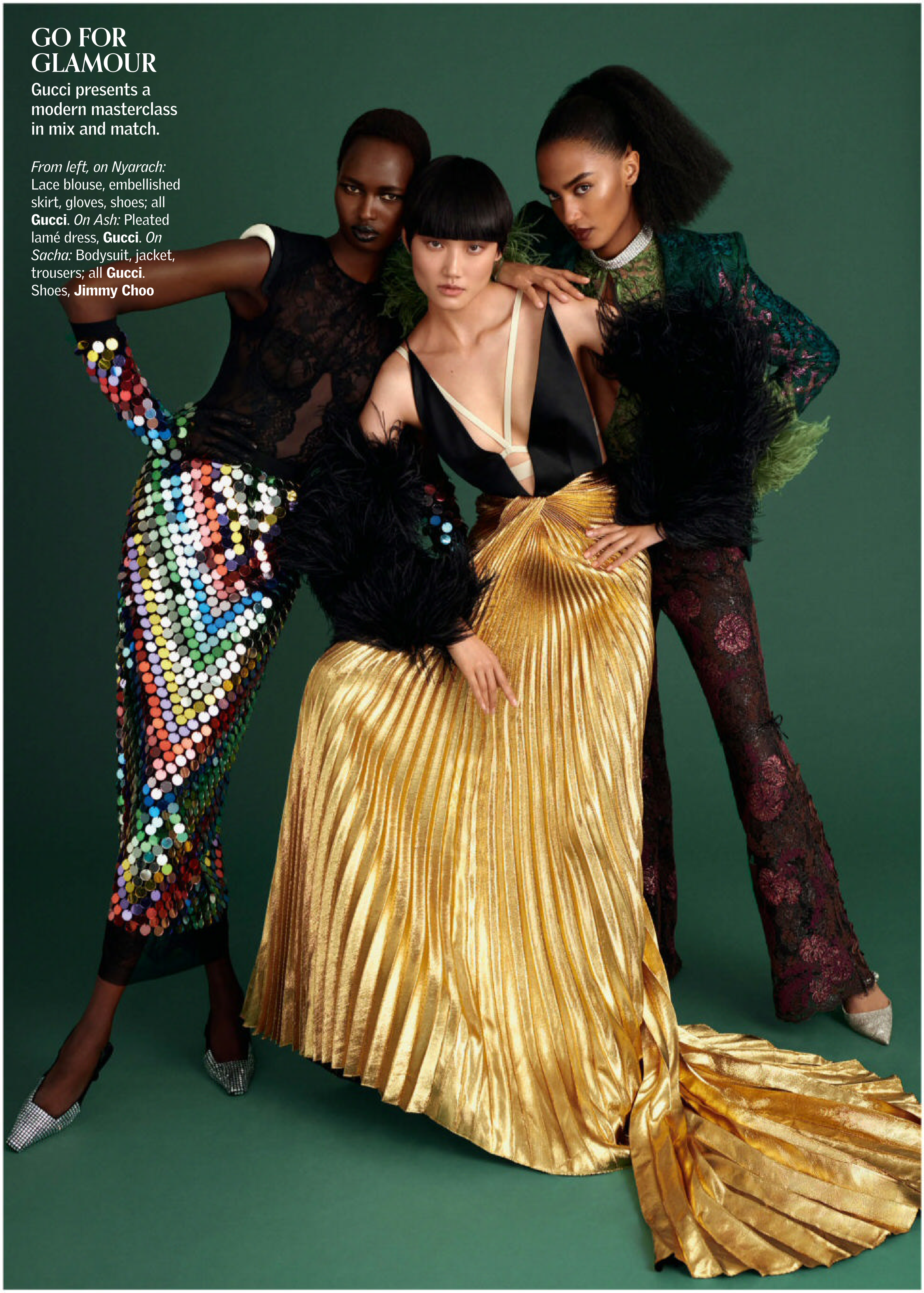
Embellished tulle top, sequined skirt; both **Versace**. Vintage gloves, **The are London**. Gold bracelet with pink and orange crystals, **The Hirst collection**. Pearl and multi-gemstone bracelet, **Butler & Wilson**. Pink resin and crystal bracelet, **Christopher Kane**. Earrings, **Stradà**



DRESS TO IMPRESS

Sequins, feathers and the power of the LBD will always be in vogue.

Embellished dress, bracelet, shoes; all **Michael Kors Collection**



GO FOR GLAMOUR

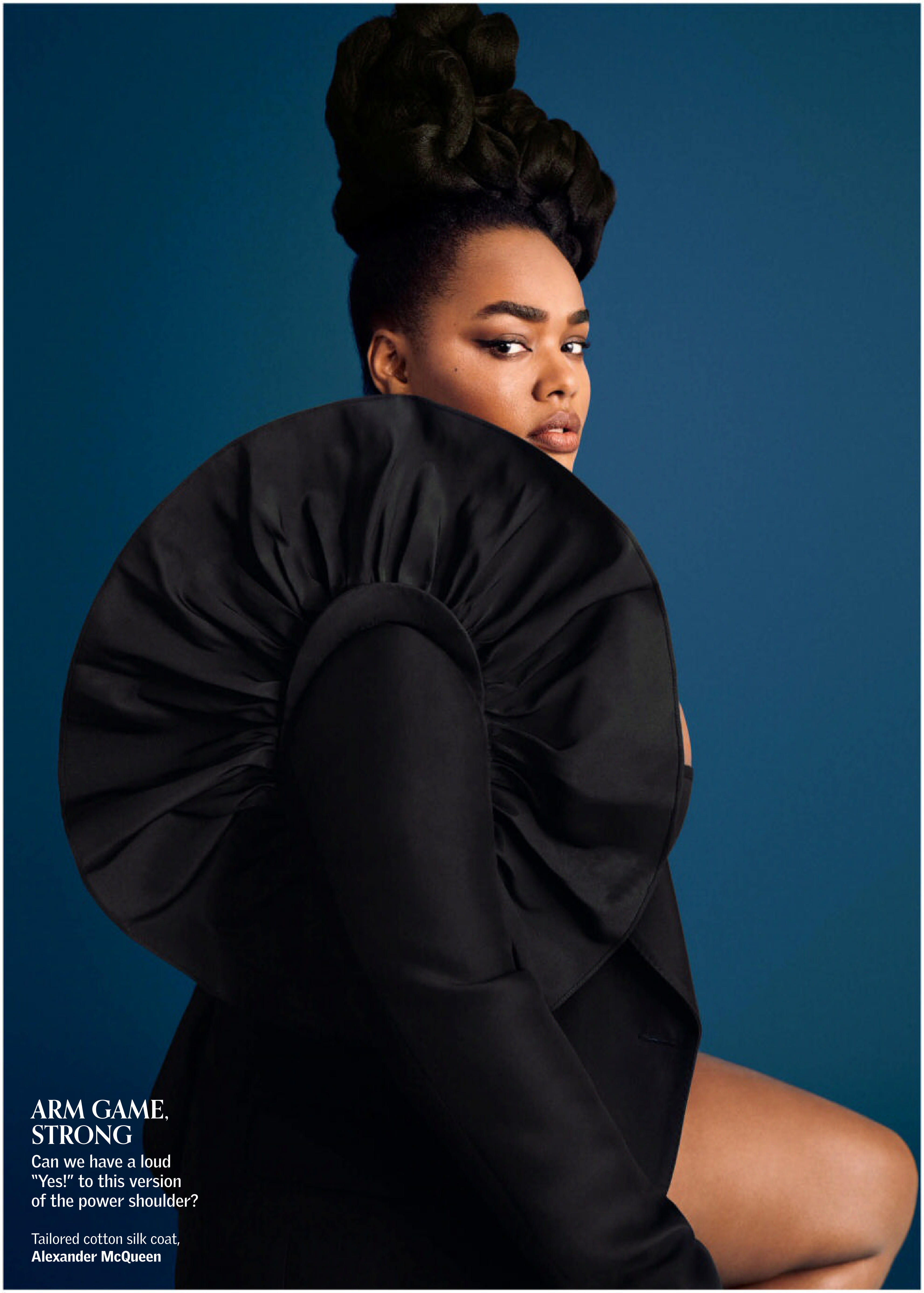
Gucci presents a modern masterclass in mix and match.

From left, on Nyarach: Lace blouse, embellished skirt, gloves, shoes; all **Gucci**. *On Ash:* Pleated lamé dress, **Gucci**. *On Sacha:* Bodysuit, jacket, trousers; all **Gucci**. Shoes, **Jimmy Choo**

A TIP OF THE CAP

There's a reason a beautifully tailored blazer,is a wardrobe failsafe, whether for pre- or post-pandemic dressing

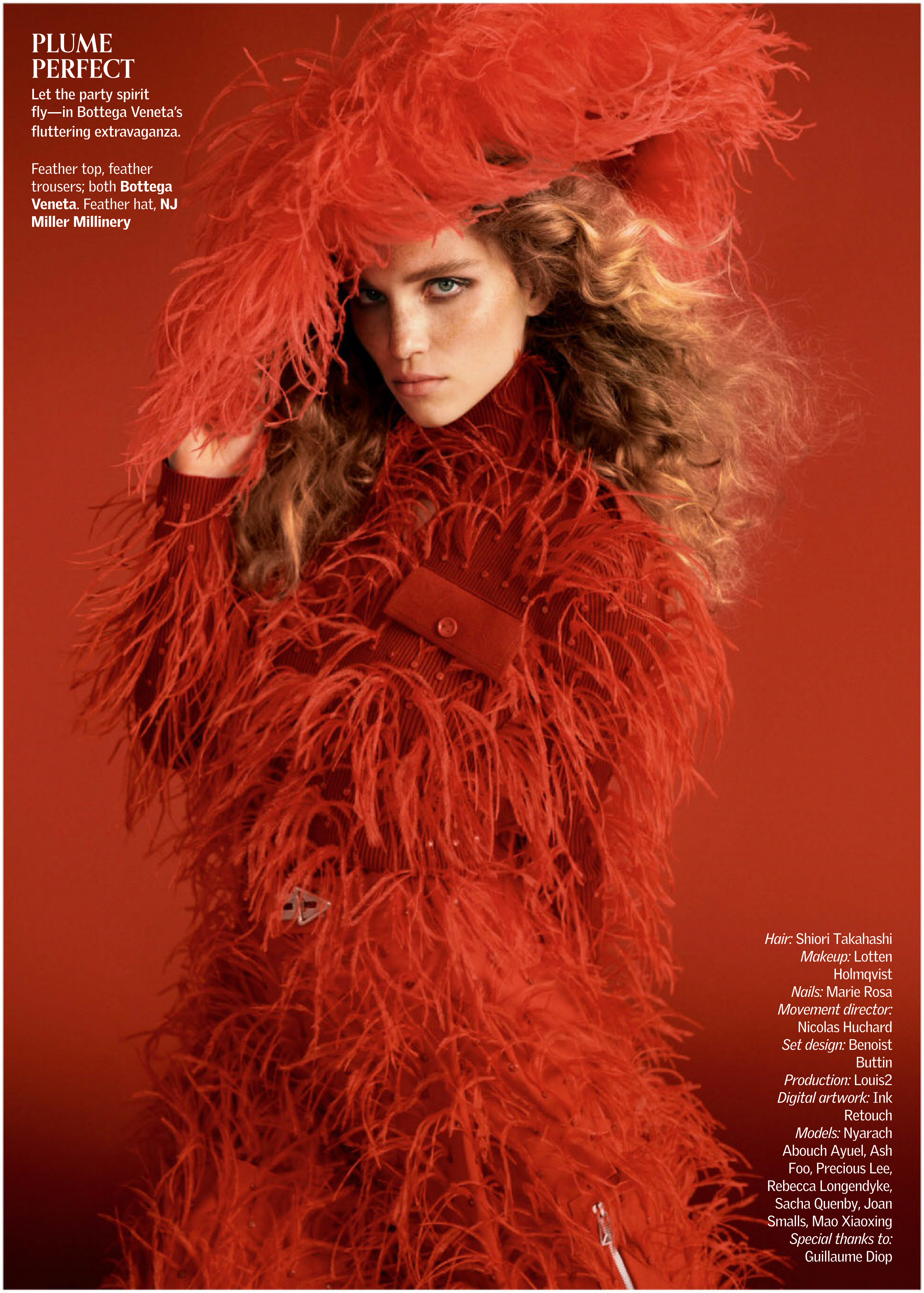
Wool jacket, **Dolce & Gabbana**. Felt hat, **Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello**



ARM GAME, STRONG

Can we have a loud "Yes!" to this version of the power shoulder?

Tailored cotton silk coat, **Alexander McQueen**



PLUME PERFECT

Let the party spirit fly—in Bottega Veneta's fluttering extravaganza.

Feather top, feather trousers; both **Bottega Veneta**. Feather hat, **NJ Miller Millinery**

Hair: Shiori Takahashi
Makeup: Lotten Holmqvist
Nails: Marie Rosa
Movement director: Nicolas Huchard
Set design: Benoist Buttin
Production: Louis2
Digital artwork: Ink Retouch
Models: Nyarach Abouch Ayuel, Ash Foo, Precious Lee, Rebecca Longendyke, Sacha Quenby, Joan Smalls, Mao Xiaoxing
Special thanks to: Guillaume Diop

Sometimes, a single event can set the course for the future. Today, if the world seems altered from the devastating effects of COVID-19, it has brought with it a new and evolved set of heroes.

While planning our annual Women Of The Year (WOTY) awards, which bring together prolific women achievers for a night packed with glamour and excellence, we decided to spotlight these new rock stars who have leveraged their popularity and platform to effect change in their industries. Take model-of-the moment Nidhi Sunil, who takes the role of an inclusivity champion in her stride, or legendary actor Salma Hayek, who made a prolific film career for herself while making a multilayered statement on ageism and diversity.

On our line-up are those whose ambitions revolve around a better planet and a tangible impact for its inhabitants. At 15, scientist Gitanjali Rao is the youngest ever winner at WOTY while the oldest, Jane Goodall, at 87, is the most resilient face of hope. Propelled by the times, our winners are redefining the world we live in by using their talent to break barriers in science, arts, business, sports and beyond.

Relevant and irrepressible, meet our stars of 2021.

WOMEN OF THE YEAR

EDITED BY **MEGHA MAHINDRU**

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

PV SINDHU

On performance anxiety and finals phobia

The annual BWF World Championships has been badminton star PV Sindhu's biggest sporting challenge. Between 2013 and 2018, she won two bronze and silver medals each in the World Championships, but the gold consistently eluded her.

She lost in the semi-finals in 2013 (to Ratchanok Intanon) and 2014 (to constant encumbrance Carolina Marin), twice in the finals (to Nozomi Okuhara in 2017 and to Marin in 2018) when nagging questions propped up about her choking on big occasions. That year, she won three titles in over a dozen tournaments, but the focus was always on the three finals she lost, including the World Championships. "That weighed on me," she shares. "People asked me: 'Do you have a finals phobia?' That was challenging. They don't realise that getting into the finals itself is a big thing."

In 2019, she had the right answers, when she beat Okuhara in the finals for a gold at the BWF World Championships.

Tokyo too wasn't easy, particularly when only four Indians qualified for the badminton events. "It'd have been good if there were more [Indians in badminton] but we got seven medals [across all disciplines], which was a big thing," says the Olympic winner. The only other thing she says she missed in Tokyo was the furore and the fanfare. "With a crowd, we get motivated and encouraged. That *josh* (enthusiasm) you get is different with a crowd. But it was a well-managed and well-maintained event, one that's always to be remembered," she says. *—As told to Arun Janardhan*

TOKYO 2
INDIA

GETTY IMAGES

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

LOVLINA BORGOHAIN

On her unrelenting quest to achieve a dream, despite the obstacles

An athlete's life isn't easy. It's all about a disciplined routine, without any let-ups. And Lovlina Borgohain knows it better than any of us. "I can't eat what I want to because it'd affect my game. I can't take a day off because it'd affect my training. It's not easy, but I keep telling myself that this is what I have to do," says the boxer.

Preparing for the Olympics is arduous enough, but more so in a pandemic. With no training protocol, equipment or sparring partner at hand, sportspeople had to rely on their discipline and unwavering self-belief. Borgohain had it tougher when she tested positive for COVID-19 as her training began. A harder blow came when she suffered a Lisfranc injury that nearly put paid to her hopes of competing in Tokyo. As if it could get any worse, she found out that her mother needed an emergency kidney transplant surgery.

She discounts all this when I ask her about the hardest challenge she's encountered so far. "Leaving home at 15 for better training opportunities," says the former Muay Thai practitioner, who entered the world of boxing without formal training. "When I look back, all the training and hard work I put in, all the sacrifices I made...those days still stand out as the hardest. I used to cry a lot, it was my first time being away from home and family."

At Tokyo, all these experiences and emotions paid off when Borgohain let out a huge scream—she had finally become the first Assamese to win a bronze at the Olympics. *—As told to Anupama Bagri* >

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

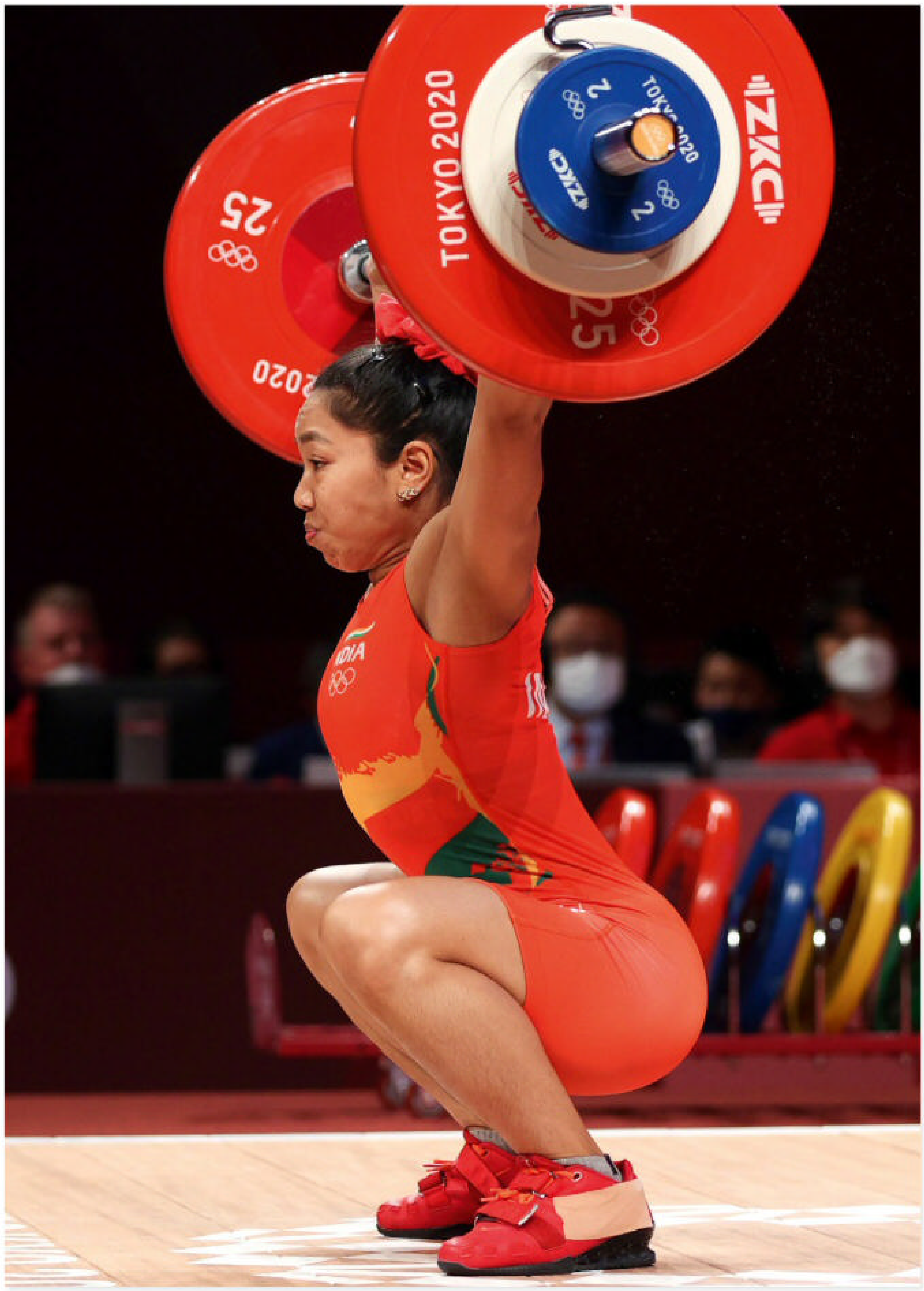
SAIKHOM MIRABAI CHANU

On conquering fear, depression and a mysterious body pain

It's safe to say Saikhom Mirabai Chanu is a woman of great strength. But the weightlifter, who can lift over two times her body weight and won India's first medal at the Tokyo Olympics, once almost contemplated quitting the sport after she failed to complete at the Rio Olympics in 2016.

At age 21, the pressures of expectations had worn her out. Chanu started seeing a psychologist, but even as her mental strength showed signs of recovery, something was amiss, physically. "After winning the Commonwealth Games gold in 2018, I had severe lower back pain," Chanu recalls of a mysterious pain that doctors couldn't diagnose. She had to pull out of that year's Asian Games and the World Championships. But months later, when she was feeling physically improved, a fear persisted: "I started living in fear: what if I get injured again? What if I don't manage getting ready in time for the Olympics?"

While training for Tokyo, the pain returned. The girl who was used to lifting hundreds of kilos of iron every day felt weak in both body and mind. "I think the worst thing was not knowing what it actually was," says Chanu. With the Olympics postponed, Chanu's coach organised a trip to St Louis in the US to see weightlifter-turned-physiotherapist Dr Aaron Horschig for her diagnosis. They found it wasn't an injury but a technical flaw that was causing the pain. "Knowing that it was because of a technical flaw in my lifting, I was able to train better and without pain, and that was a huge relief."—*As told to Suprita Das*



GETTY IMAGES

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

AVANI LEKHARA

On the power of self-love and perseverance

Most people who suffer life-altering accidents don't go on to win paralympic medals. But most people aren't Avani Lekhara, who won India a gold and a bronze at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics. Despite the odds stacked against her—a teenage girl playing a sport overwhelmingly populated by men—she persevered.

Lekhara, who turns 20 this month, took up shooting as a hobby after a car accident in 2012 left her paralysed from the waist down. Once she won her first title against able-bodied peers in a regional match in Rajasthan, there was no looking back.

Her rise to the top, though, didn't come without its hurdles. The rifle shooter says the initial years after her accident were "a nightmare". The only way out was to believe in herself. "Shooting gave me the self-confidence to think I could do anything," she says. "I've represented India all over the world on wheels and I've been able to do that through positive affirmations. I'm totally in love with myself, and that's how I know I have what it takes to make it."

There is a grit to Lekhara that belies her soft-spokenness, and nothing is more a testament to that mental fortitude than the fact that, along with being an internationally decorated shooting prodigy, she's also a law student. "Even before I started shooting, I wanted to be a judge. There aren't many female judges in our judiciary and I want to change that. Hopefully, in 2024, I can hold both my degree and my gold medals in my hands," she says. *—As told to Arushi Sinha* ■

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

INVESTOR OF THE YEAR

ANJULA ACHARIA

The celebrity manager and serial investor's repeated success is built on her foresight to predict the next big thing and take a chance on it, writes **Hitha Herzog**

Anjula Acharia sits on her sofa at her family home in London, cup in hand, channelling her own version of desi hygge. "I make my own blend of chai," she says, "with turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, peppercorn and a sachet of Vital Proteins, a company I invested in."

Acharia's collective portfolio of talent, companies and media properties under her company A-Series Investments includes many female-funded businesses like Bumble, ClassPass, Yumi (an organic baby food company based in California), managing actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and playing executive producer on *Evil Eye*, a horror series inspired by a Madhuri Shekar book. "Everyone I invest in has three things in common: their ideas are great and fill a space that has otherwise been ignored, they don't know a lot about the space they are about to build in, and they always bet on themselves," says the 21st-century arbitrator of pop culture.

ClassPass founder and executive chairman Payal Kadakia Pujji recalls their first meeting in 2012: "I was working at Warner Music Group and had an idea to start a company, but wasn't sure if I wanted to jump right in. The uncertainty was an inflection point for Anjula, who told me: 'If you can't bet on yourself, how can I?'"

EYE ON THE PRIZE

Acharia's brutal truth-telling and talent development comes from her days at an executive search firm in London and as co-founder of *Desi Hits!*, a multimedia platform that focused on South Asian content and combined her love for tech and entertainment by spotlighting bhangra and rap mash-ups that were 'breaking the internet' before the saying existed. "Growing up in England, I'd unfortunately met with a lot of racism," says Acharia. "It leaves you in a vulnerable place, fighting for visibility. Something had to change. I saw the opportunity to change it."

A chance meeting with music executive Jimmy Iovine, the co-founder of Interscope Records and Beats By Dr Dre, proved to be pivotal. He was the first independent investor and mentor for *Desi Hits!* "He taught me to be an anticipator of pop culture—the conversations that people are having at dinner tables and coffee houses, and the ability to see around the corner. When Payal came to me with ClassPass, and everyone was talking about SoulCycle and Barry's, I knew it was needed." After a few attempts at launching Chopra Jonas's music career, Acharia turned to TV, using that same sixth sense. "You were seeing Sofia Vergara, Viola Davis and Kerry Washington take on leading roles. Television was becoming more inclusive, so I went to them and said your next thing will be to put a South Asian woman [on air]."

THE GIRL CODE

If it sounds like Acharia's investing life is charmed, it is. What it's not, is easy. With all the wins (her most recent exit was Bumble) there have been some misses. For example, Uber. "I questioned if they'd be able to manage the complexities of regulation, and weirdly, I didn't think I'd use it. Getting into strangers' cars was something we've been told all of our lives not to do. But that's the disruption of tech," says Acharia, whose future investments will focus on wellness, animal welfare, and global proliferation of content.

"Anjula is what I call a 'kick-ass' person," says Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo and one of our winners at Women Of The Year 2021. "She has a nose for spotting trends and connects the dots on investments that may not be obvious to others. But most importantly, she gives female founders wings to do the right thing."

A strong network of women cheerleaders is essential in navigating early-stage investing, but Acharia also credits her success to slowly understanding one's worth. "You're only worth as much as you think you are. The 'next great so and so' starts with someone who approaches a challenge with confidence, vision and faith. And that's someone I'd bet on." ■

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

GLOBAL ICON OF THE YEAR

SALMA HAYEK

The legendary actor, who juggles her roles as a producer, writer, philanthropist, superhero, mother and wife, shares her guide to living life to its full potential. By **Priyanka Khanna**

After over 60 films and a prolific career that took her from Mexican soap operas to Marvel superhero films, the multi-hyphenate actor-producer-philanthropist Salma Hayek surprises me while short-listing an achievement she's proud of: "My children, my family. I'm most proud of my family," Hayek says, without batting an eyelid. "I'm most proud that I beat the odds and was able to do the impossible, or what everyone thought was impossible—for someone like me to have a career in the United States," shrugs the star, who has defied expectations with every milestone.

These days, there's so much conversation about the elusive work-life balance. And while it remains a problematic concept to many around the world, it's one that the 55-year-old has tackled head-on. "You know, as women, we sometimes hear that it's impossible to have a career and a family, and to be present for both. I'm proud that I've been able to do it," says the actor who has a teenage daughter, Valentina, with husband François Henri-Pinault and is stepmother to his children from previous relationships.

AGE OF BEAUTY

Her fifties, Hayek insists, have been the most fulfilling yet, both personally and professionally. "In so many ways. For me, it's been the most important [decade]. I've spent 15 years with my husband and we're still making each other laugh, still understanding each other well. And that's not very common—for love to survive, to thrive, to keep growing. It's very nice to have it in your mid-fifties, it is an amazing gift."

On the work front too, things look promising. Earlier this year, Hayek reprised her role as Sonia Kincaid in the comic caper sequel *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard*. This month, we will see her in two blockbusters—first in Marvel's *Eternals*, directed by Oscar-winning Chloé Zhao, alongside Angelina Jolie, Kumail Nanjiani and Kit Harrington. Funnily, Hayek initially thought she was being offered the role of a grandmother, as playing a superhero at 55 didn't figure even in her wildest dreams. But if not on screen, then in real life, she hopes to fulfil this dream: "Maybe François's eldest son can give me a grandchild. He'll tell me to absolutely get over that thought, but I'd be so happy to be a grandma or a step-grandma," she laughs, circling back to her family.

Also out this month is Ridley Scott's anticipated *The House Of Gucci*, which brings together legends old and new such as Al Pacino, Adam Driver and Lady Gaga, alongside a slew of releases planned with Hayek's production house, Ventanarosa. "My career has never been better. At this time I don't have any financial incertitude, which is difficult when you start as an actor. Even if you make it in your thirties, you don't know when people will stop calling you. There's a lot of anguish. Today, I'm healthy; I survived COVID-19 [Hayek recovered from a near-fatal case this year], and spiritually too, I feel very strong. I found my way. I have a joyous internal life and I'm very much in touch with myself in that respect. The stronger I've dived in, the better my life outside has been."

It's evident that Hayek lives a full life, one she's immensely grateful for. What's her secret? "I'm creative and curious, so I'm always interested in many things. I like to dance, eat, sing, crack jokes, laugh and tease. I'm curious about nature and science, about how things work, about business. I've always had an active imagination, so that's what keeps me young. I know people who are way younger than me but they are old because they are not curious about anything. They don't know how to find joy; they're too self-absorbed."

That's success, the Salma Hayek way. Maybe it's time for a memoir next? ■

JACKIE NICKERSON

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

FASHION ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

MASABA GUPTA

At 33, she helms the House of Masaba and has a hit TV show in its second season alongside a growing community of nearly two million followers, But her eyes are always on the big picture: expanding her legacy. By **Priyanka Khanna**

Masaba Gupta is on a mission. Well, she has several, but topping the list is to debunk popular perceptions around what it means to be a fashion designer. "*Masaba Masaba*, besides changing my life and providing a distraction to many during the pandemic, made people see that there is much more to a designer's life. Fashion isn't just a stop-gap between graduating school and getting married. I wanted to fight that frivolity—and that designing is not about sketching, head in the clouds, with Dido playing in the background," she laughs.

For Gupta, who studied at SNDT University and made her fashion debut at the age of 19, on the persistence of the late designer Wendell Rodricks, fashion is a serious business. From that first show in 2009, she brought in a new pop iconography—think Tamil script, camera and prints, and her iconic palms—and in the last decade, she's turned House of Masaba from a fledgling label into a household brand with six stores across India and had collaborations with everything from HBO's juggernaut TV series *Game Of Thrones* to heritage jewellery house Amrapali, as well as with corporate bigwigs including Samsung and Nykaa Beauty. Most recently, she pivoted to e-commerce, with online sales now contributing 60 per cent of her brand's revenue.

Every entrepreneur knows that pivoting and adapting are keystones for success. For Gupta, it changed the very basis of how she approached work. "Earlier my process was reverse—mood board, colours, what I was feeling at that moment. Now, the feeling comes later. We are driven by data, and then I put the emotion in it—I think of young women, curvy women like myself, and older women like my mother."

DESIGN WISE

Masaba's guide to entrepreneurship

Know your worth: "Speak from a position of strength. Even when negotiating with a giant, ask for what you deserve."

Delegate: "It's something I'm working on. The next decade is about separating me from the brand and continuing the storytelling. We need to leave behind the baggage of the designer."

Learn from your losses: "Be unemotional about cutting your losses. Take advice from sound business people. Count every penny and learn finances."

Adapt: "If your business can't pivot, it's not going to make it."

Data tells her that women are buying saris like never before, with Chanderi winning for its heft. It also shows that indigo is the hottest-selling colour and that the A-line kurta has been replaced by a draped version or a three-piece set. Of course, lounge-wear is a no-brainer. But it's not only charts and graphs and numbers. Gupta is balancing it all with her creative vision, creating at least ten designs for every collection that offer an insight into her genius mindspace.

The one thing she learnt on the job (and not at design school) was to value herself. "There were times when I was younger, when I didn't have the language to articulate a fair deal. I want to tell all young women, 'Please do not give your brand away.' Now I know my time and energy is priceless—and my focus is on longevity."

I pose a question that unintentionally becomes her favourite: in all the interviews she's done so far, what's the one thing a reporter has never asked her?

She takes a moment. "'How do you do it all, mentally?' It's an underrated question. 'How do you get up and show up everyday?' I never unwind. A group of people is called 'loneliness'—that's the real spirit of entrepreneurship."

SASHA JAIRAM

GLOBAL BUSINESS ICON OF THE YEAR

INDRA NOOYI

She made history when she became the first woman and the first South Asian to become the CEO of PepsiCo. But what comes next? A mission to change the future of work, discovers **Shahnaz Siganporia**

You'd think after leading a giant corporation for over a decade and working days, nights, weekends and holidays, a retired CEO would acquire a tropical island where she could sip cocktails and revel in doing absolutely nothing (she would have literally earned it). But Indra Nooyi has her heart set on a very different goal. "When I left PepsiCo I thought I was going to be bereft. I didn't even know how I was going to handle the emotion when I was close to my retirement day. But surprisingly, the day after I walked out, I walked into my family office at home, which is now my new workspace, and I haven't looked back. My life has become so fulfilling and rich ever since," shares the 66-year-old from her home (and now, office) in Greenwich, Connecticut. Nooyi has definitely slowed down, but even as she spends more time with her family, she's ready to usher in the future of work as a more equitable and human goal, while sharing her learnings with the next generation of leaders.

THE STORY SO FAR

As the former CEO and chairperson of an American food and beverage giant, Nooyi always had a keen eye on the now and the next. Over a stellar 24 years at PepsicCo—of which 12 were spent at the helm—she ushered in directional changes such as pushing the company to a version of sustainability as well as leading the way for its digitisation, alongside initiatives to create a more equal and diverse workplace. She's the sort of leader who embraces change and innovation while fostering an environment where people and product grow and thrive. "Don't attempt to be a leader if you're not willing to make the tough choices. If you want to lead, put your hand up for the most difficult assignments. And then take that difficult assignment and bring it over the finish line. You'll never be forgotten." Nooyi brings this same spirit to her retirement.

THE WAY AHEAD

So what is next on her agenda? Her first book, *My Life In Full* (Hachette India)—which released in September and in no time made it to *The New York Times* bestseller list—becomes a sort of mission statement for what comes after. At the tail end of the book, Nooyi clearly states the challenges women face at work, alongside the possible solutions identifying stakeholders and systems, both private and public, that need to come together to create change. She emphasises the need to truly humanise the workplace. The obvious question tumbles out: is politics the next step? "No, I'm not meant for politics," she says. "I want to work with people to enable policy and be an enactor."

In pursuit of her latest task, she's already signed on to multiple boards including Amazon, Philips and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. She's also on the Dean's Advisory Council at MIT's School of Engineering and an independent director of the International Cricket Council. While the boards offer her a space to share her knowledge and vision, it's her teaching assignment at the US Military Academy at West Point that has her most excited. "I never thought this would be as fulfilling as it's ended up being because I get to work with 18- to 22-year-old cadets who are studying to defend the freedoms and rights we have in this country. I'm in awe of them," she says.

From building a company to bettering the workplace—and not just for women but for the next generation of workers and leaders—we can't wait to see her in her new role. ■

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

AGENT OF CHANGE

ALIA BHATT

Unperturbed by naysayers, the Bollywood star has always blazed her own path. Now, she carries the same approach to her relief initiatives, finds **Sadaf Shaikh**

Alia Bhatt seems to have it all—a series of big-ticket releases in the pipeline, the adulation of fans, the respect of critics and the favour of every sought-after director in her industry. But the Bollywood actor is in possession of another asset that nobody quite gives her enough credit for: a good head on her shoulders. As a young star who tasted meteoric success ever since her debut at age 19, Bhatt has learned to walk a tightrope between the boons and banes of early fame. Almost a decade on, you could say she's made it through to the other side, nearly unscathed.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

It's doubly impressive then that the actor's oeuvre is not limited to her on-screen performances. In recent years, Bhatt has also thrown her weight behind social initiatives. In 2017, she founded CoExist, an ecological enterprise aimed at reducing the abrasiveness between humans, animals and the environment. In 2018, she announced 'Mi Wardrobe is Su Wardrobe' through which fans could buy hand-picked favourites from her personal closet for charity, with the proceeds benefitting 40 families in the town of Kikkeri in Karnataka. A year later, she raised funds for children suffering from heart disease through a painting exhibition at Mumbai's Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children, and last year, she launched her own sustainable kidswear brand, Ed-a-Mamma.

In 2021, a year that no one in modern history will soon forget, Bhatt's humanitarianism emerged once again. Soon after she recovered from her own battle with COVID-19 in mid-April, Bhatt reached out to award-winning journalist Faye D'Souza with a proposal to use their combined influence to amplify relevant information pertinent to the second wave of the pandemic. D'Souza, who was also feeling powerless with the devastating effect of the virus, immediately came on board. "I wanted to try and help by sharing the right kind of information and connecting people to the right sources," Bhatt says over Zoom from her Mumbai home. "I started getting a lot of WhatsApp forwards with unverified information put together haphazardly. I immediately thought that if I could leverage my social media following across all platforms, I could get the right kind of information to people. But I couldn't do that by myself because I didn't have the required resources. So I reached out to Faye, who resonated with the idea because she does such a fabulous job with disseminating information herself."

MARCHING ON

When the actor introduced #CircleOfHope through her social media platforms, detractors saw it as a PR-driven exercise designed to combat the backlash against her recent Maldives trip. But Bhatt put on her blinkers and dedicated herself to the task at hand. Over the next few weeks, with the help of a savvy team, she began posting vital information (in English and Hindi) related to the helplines and the availability of hospital beds and ambulances, alongside highlighting NGOs working for COVID-19 relief, mental health and child and animal welfare. In addition to this, she also helmed a five-episode podcast series featuring conversations with virologists, scientists, endovascular surgeons, researchers and professors to bust myths around the vaccines and eradicate vaccine hesitancy.

In her 2007 book *King Of Bollywood*, film critic Anupama Chopra wrote: "Stars and journalists coexisted like a warring couple who couldn't live with or without each other." And it's true. The self-importance of an actor and the sanctimony of a writer can forge a tenuous bond, at best. Did Bhatt, at any point, feel like D'Souza and her made strange bedfellows? "Not at all," she says, shakes her head. "Faye's detail to precision is so inspiring, as is her commitment to speaking her heart while providing facts, which isn't easy in her profession. I think the difference in our backgrounds was actually to our advantage because I learnt a lot from her. It's like Shelley Zalis [CEO of The Female Quotient] said: 'A woman alone has power, collectively we have impact.' Simply put, we are better together." ■

BIKRAMJIT BOSE

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

AGENT OF CHANGE

FAYE D'SOUZA

For this award-winning journalist, her focus remains sharing the truth in a virtual sea of unreliable news, says **Sadaf Shaikh**

Mumbai-based Faye D'Souza is a journalist in the purest sense. Eloquent and exceptionally real, she digs for the facts and follows a story to its logical conclusion. In 2019, when the then TV anchor resigned from Mirror Now, many lamented the loss of an original, ethical voice in Indian media—an anomaly these days—and implored her to stay. They needn't have worried.

Shortly after, D'Souza's talent and tenacity was brought to Firework, a short-format video network app that delivers news through 30-second reels. Soon, she went independent and that's when COVID-19 hit India, sending the entire nation into disarray. To counter the dubious WhatsApp forwards that created panic during a terrifying pandemic, D'Souza, with help from her bright team of journalists, began posting verified daily news updates and broadcasting palatable snippets of information via Instagram.

CALL OF DUTY

"It's obviously a huge responsibility," D'Souza admits. "We have to be doubly careful about everything we put out. The job is to wake up every day and be a good journalist. You can't change the world overnight and stop the WhatsApp circulation or the unreliable news, but you can remedy the situation by providing the audience with an alternative that they can rely on."

Critics may point to her lack of on-ground reporting, but in her 17-year-long career, she has showcased an editor's expertise by hand-picking the stories that matter and fervently amplifying them. In this, she brings the highest level of intelligence and rigorous preparation to her newsfeed and virtual debates. That's what makes her different from people spinning in the blogosphere or sitting in armchairs opining about what's wrong with the world. Her 1.1 million Instagram followers are not just ADD-hit millennials, but any citizen who wants to stay well-informed.

During the second wave of the pandemic, when the importance of verified information was impressed upon citizens scurrying for hospital beds and oxygen tanks, D'Souza felt rather helpless. She had just launched her 10-minute-long news-bulletin-style segment called *Just The News*, where she conducted an old-school reading of the daily news without any opinions or debate.

But she knew she had to do more.

That's when she launched #CircleOfHope with actor Alia Bhatt. The idea was simple—to help verify government and private helplines in circulation—but the execution was time-consuming and frustrating. "When I first posted about starting #CircleOfHope with Alia, I was mercilessly trolled," she recalls. "I wanted to turn around and respond to them, but Alia advised me against it and said, 'We should just continue doing what we set out to do. It will benefit those who find it useful. And as for the trolls, just don't read what they have to say.' I found that to be very mature."

In collaborating together, the actor and journalist found the perfect pairing of skill and superpower that India really needed in that moment. "The work was split between both our teams. We had people call each and every number to make sure it was operational. We also found a lot of verified NGOs that were doing good work with allocating donations, so we tried to highlight those by making their bank account numbers available," adds D'Souza.

Even now, as the country slowly crawls back to its pre-pandemic pace, D'Souza refuses to rest on her laurels. There's no slowing down this mum-to-be. For her next act, she will be seen hosting *Context India* (a four-part weekly series featuring incisive reports and expansive discussions between prominent personalities analysing the unfolding of the pandemic in India) for a global audience with Al Jazeera. And if you thought she was all work and no play, D'Souza surprises us once again—she is currently part of the latest season of Amazon Prime Video's unscripted stand-up comedy series *One Mic Stand*. ■

BIKRAMJIT BOSE

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

PERFORMER OF THE YEAR

SHEFALI SHAH

Late bloomer or living legend, whichever way you look, this 48-year-old actor is bent on pushing the expiration date in an industry that equates success with precocity, says **Udita Jhunjhunwala**

In an industry where marriage, motherhood or skirting the age of 30 often relegates an actor to the roles of a sister, mother or even grandmother, Shefali Shah stands out as an anomaly. Over two decades ago, after years of acting in television shows, Shah debuted on the big screen, portraying the role of Bhiku Mhatre's wife Pyaari in the cult film *Satya* (1998). A decade since, she has played Akshay Kumar's mother in *Waqt: The Race Against Time* (2005) and Amitabh Bachchan's wife in *The Last Lear* (2007). In 2015, she landed *Dil Dhadakne Do*, her most commercial film to date, in which she plays Neelam, mother to Ranveer Singh and Priyanka Chopra Jonas (who, in reality, is just 10 years younger to her on-screen mum).

UNIFORM CODE

Where most actors stay relevant by ensuring their visibility on screen, Shah took an opposing position by choosing to only inhabit worlds and characters outside of her own reality. "I made certain choices which obviously put me into a much older age bracket," says Shah, who has always been selective about her projects, a trait she believes is the key to her longevity as an actor. It took years of patience and judiciousness till she got her breakout role in the 2019 Netflix series *Delhi Crime*, which bagged the best drama series honour at the 48th International Emmy Awards. In the show, Shah plays the lead as police inspector Vartika Chaturvedi, a role that marked a turning point in her career. "Before *Delhi Crime*, though I played important roles, I was also not getting age-appropriate ones. Vartika is one of the strongest female characters written in film or TV," says the 48-year-old about her role based on the former Delhi Police DCP Chhaya Sharma, who cracked the case of the brutal 2012 gang-rape in Delhi.

These days, Shah is enjoying the busiest year of her career. Besides completing the second season of *Delhi Crime*, she will also be seen in the medical drama series *Human*, as well as three feature films—*Darlings* (alongside Alia Bhatt), *Doctor G* (with Ayushmann Khurrana), and *Jalsa* (with Vidya Balan). "Earlier, an actress' shelf life was probably up to 25 years of age. Directors and producers didn't know what to do with actresses older than that, besides casting them as mothers, sisters, and so on." And while Shah has often played these assigned roles, her biggest peeve is that of defining an actor by one character, which never really offers a complete story. "Take Vartika, who is a working woman and a mother. But women only get recognised as unidimensional: homemaker, mother, working woman... Once you've played Amitabh Bachchan's wife or Akshay Kumar's mother, there is no scope for being a central character, and playing a heroine is out of the question," adds Shah, who sees OTT services as a catalyst for change.

FOREVER YOUNG

For actors who did not easily fit into the Bollywood stereotype, streaming platforms have not only helped them push the creative envelope with their content-based shows, but have also opened up opportunities with a new diversity of age-agnostic, character-driven roles. "With OTT and the way writers are approaching things today, they can see that here is a woman and she is in her prime in her thirties and forties," says Shah, who broke the mould by becoming the centre of the narrative in *Delhi Crime*.

American essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." And Shah has blazed a trail for women over 40 in an infamously ageist industry. "Characters don't have an expiry date, and I never aspired to be a star. I don't have a very long résumé but I do have a strong one," she says of her impactful filmography. "Where I have reached now, finally, is a resurrection. I am so glad for it, but I am also greedy to do more," adds the actor, who remains one of the freshest stars on OTT today. ■

PHOTO: DEEKSHA RATHORE. STYLING: JAHNVI BANSAL. HAIR: PAULAMI CHAKRABORTY. MAKEUP: DIKSHA KHANNA

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

TECH LEADER OF THE YEAR

SHARMISTHA DUBEY

How did a Jamshedpur-bred engineer seize the pandemic to upend Silicon Valley and reinvent the online dating game into a multibillion-dollar empire? **Parizaad Khan Sethi** finds out

Photographed by **ARTURO OLMOS**

What makes Sharmistha 'Shar' Dubey the 'boss of romance'? As CEO of Match Group, a US$40-billion technology conglomerate that owns *Match.com*, Tinder, OkCupid and Hinge, among others, she's definitely earned that title. But it wasn't all that Jane Austen she read growing up, or the fact that she met the love of her life early on. Turns out, it was actually her crippling social anxiety that helped her build a global dating empire based on communication.

Growing up introverted and anxious in social situations compelled Dubey to observe and glean patterns of behaviour from people who effortlessly navigated small talk, aced social interactions and made connections easily. It made her a keen observer of human behaviour, and that unconscious training served her well when she landed a job at Match 15 years ago. "I worked with cultural biological anthropologists and research scientists. I studied a lot of data and I developed this instinct over time of where to look and what to look for. But my [early] curiosity about human interaction between people gave me a good advantage when I got here," she says.

GIRL, DISRUPTED

Dubey grew up in Jamshedpur in the 1970s and 80s, when the internet and technology as we know them both today didn't exist. Her father was a professor of mechanical engineering and he encouraged her to get an engineering degree at IIT, where she was the lone woman in most of her classes with nearly a hundred men (Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google, was her classmate). "We didn't have a women's bathroom on campus, so I would run over to my dorm every time I needed to use the restroom," she recalls.

Dubey later saved up to apply for a master's degree at Ohio State University, and after stints at various technology companies, she landed at Match in 2006, as director of product for an online dating start-up called Chemistry. >

Articulate and incisive, Dubey doesn't fit the stereotype of the bleary-eyed engineer in a hoodie, who shows up to work in the same outfit. At her job interview, a perplexed CEO wondered why on earth he should hire her, given that she had no prior experience with consumer internet or online dating. Her response: "You have to take a gamble." And he did. Dubey has been with the Match group and its former parent company, IAC, ever since.

SWIPE RIGHT

At Match, Dubey channelled her human-behaviour-observing muscle into her work. "The part of the job that attracted me were the sociological and anthropological elements of this very complicated human problem of who we love, who we are attracted to, and how love lasts. To be able to solve it through technology is really unique."

Part techie and part social anthropologist, Dubey's astute insights into the human condition, combined with her product-builder's mind, has brought major success to some of the apps by the Match Group. In 2017, Dubey raised many eyebrows at Tinder when she suggested it introduce a feature called Likes You, to show users which profiles had already liked them before they swiped left or right on them. It sounds like a high-school cafeteria tactic: tell someone so-and-so has a crush on them so they'd look on them favourably, but it turns out there's proven research that suggests we tend to like people more when we know they like us. "The reason the Likes You feature is so popular is because of that deep gratification we get from knowing who's liked us and so we like them better, so the chances of that turning into a match becomes that much more." Dubey also knew that this was a feature people would pay for and cleverly offered it only on Tinder Gold, a tier available to paid users of the app. Tinder blew up in popularity nearly overnight and that feature directly fuelled its rise into the billion-dollar company that it is today.

This victory mirrored a previous experiment she had tried at Match, where she had spearheaded the Daily Five feature—a list of five profiles that Match suggests a user pay closer attention to, based on the user's behaviour on the app. "That actually does move people to pay attention to them. It's at the heart of what happens with arranged marriages too—someone you trust telling you that you should like this person goes a long way in you actually liking that person," adds Dubey.

MATCH FIXED

While growing up, Dubey says she had disdain for arranged marriages. That's understandable, considering she was expected to enter into one before she completed her education, and had it not been for her father, a formal set-up might have been her fate. Dubey, however, met a fellow engineer at her first job in India. The two reconnected at grad school in the US, fell in love and got married after they graduated.

Today, she's far removed from being impacted by the institution of arranged marriage and is in a position to analyse (even appreciate) the amount of data, algorithms and connections that matchmakers need to compute mentally before they come up with a successful match. Dubey says her engineers apply similar principles and constructs to their algorithms which are scaled more systematically and technically, but the instincts behind them are the same.

"IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR LOVE THAT LASTS, THE ABSOLUTE TOP CRITERIA ARE KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY"

For a matchmaker, a similar upbringing is a litmus test for compatibility. "There's also a level of personality matching that these aunties do. They will never be able to articulate it well, but it's sort of 'Oh, she's super flighty' or 'She needs someone who's more mild-tempered.' These are the calculations that they're making and these are the natural signals people in India have picked up when they're trying to set you up. Now I have more appreciation for that institution than I did growing up," she says.

THE PANDEMIC PIVOT

Dubey was named CEO of the Dallas-based Match Group in early 2020, a few weeks before the world shut down. As head of a business that was based on two people meeting in person, it was a test by fire. "We saw a pretty sharp decline in almost every metric across all our platforms. It became clear that people couldn't go out and meet, and that this was going to have to dramatically change." One of the first things Dubey did was to expedite all video features and products. Dubey has been a huge champion of dating via video for years, but a few early trial and errors proved the technology back then couldn't keep up with her vision. Now that there are smartphones in every hand and Zoom grids are our new boardrooms, she sees them as an important half-date that precedes an IRL meeting—a chance to get more insight beyond someone's photo and bio. Of course, the video features took off phenomenally. Also, with video, geography, which was previously the biggest dating constraint, faded away and people began looking for connections all over the globe.

Curiously, a month into lockdown, the company started seeing engagement, particularly among women, at levels they never

had before. Tinder experienced the highest level of matching and longer conversations, which got Dubey thinking. The pandemic had driven people to find partners. "It's human need—none of us do well with loneliness and the isolation of the pandemic drove people to say never again am I going to isolate on my own." COVID-19 also forced most people to re-prioritise what mattered to them. Dubey says their surveys showed that honesty became more prized than physical looks. It also brought in revenue. *Wired* reported that Match Group ended its pandemic year with 17 per cent higher revenue than the year before.

LOVE, ACTUALLY

Dubey seems to have a solid, successful marriage, but says her own love story doesn't really influence her work. She pulls back the curtain a little bit to offer a glimpse into that inner world, when she says she's motivated by a hopeless desire for everyone to find that relationship that makes them better versions of themselves. "I met my husband over 25 years ago and I absolutely think my life is better with him than it would be without him. The optimism, happiness and growth that comes out of a relationship drives me to help everyone find it," she says. It sounds like the archetype of what Match users might be hoping for when they sign up.

There's no formula to falling in love, but Dubey offers her two bits: "If you're looking for love that lasts, the absolute top criteria are kindness and generosity. No two human beings are ever going to be in sync at all times from youth, through middle age and to old age. It's not possible. So the fundamental thing we need is to be able to have the kindness and generosity to give them space, and show how we're there for them." If she can figure out how to code that into an app, her 'boss of romance' title will need an upgrade. ■

SPOTLIGHT OF THE YEAR

GITANJALI RAO

Counting Angelina Jolie and Malala Yousafzai among her role models, this 15-year-old inventor and coder is bent on breaking stereotypes in STEM, says **Akanksha Kamath**

At 15, Gitanjali Rao isn't your archetypal scientist, but her avidity for facts and her problem-solving approach puts her in line with some of the most brilliant thinkers of our time. "I always start with problems I see in society and those that are personal to me," says Colorado-based Rao, who founded Kindly, an anti-cyberbullying app, after a first-hand experience with bullying.

Rao is a fan of Greek mythology and named her bubblegum-pink device which diagnoses early stages of addiction to morphine Epione, after the goddess of recovery. It came to her after seeing a relative go through drug dependency. Another blue apparatus she christened Tethys, after the Greek water goddess, which detects lead in water and was created after Michigan's Flint water crisis. It won her the moniker America's Top Young Scientist, a merit she outdoes every year—from the Forbes 30 Under 30 List (2019) to the TIME Kid of the Year (2020) and now being our youngest awardee at Women Of The Year 2021.

Rao's maturity is evident when she says, "A lot of people tell me that I can't do what I'm doing because of how old I am or because of the way I look." It's not new. Throughout history, women-led ideas have been sidelined. But Rao is from a newer generation of scientists: "We GenZers are not restricted with a box around our head. We're not afraid to think big and think back to reality," she says, as she continues to write books, hosts workshops for young innovator and hopes for better representation of women in STEM.

SHARIF HAMZA

SPOTLIGHT OF THE YEAR

VIBHA BAKSHI

The most extraordinary stories come from the unlikeliest corners. And that's where this award-winning, itinerant filmmaker found her gender-rights heroes, finds **Almas Khateeb**

Most people's turning point in life comes with certain milestones—college, marriage, midlife—but not for Vibha Bakshi. "It was during the screening of *Daughters Of Mother India* when a woman came up to me and said that she knew of a farmer in Haryana who married a gang-rape survivor," says Bakshi, stunned at the revelation, given the state's unofficial status as being the hot seat of patriarchy in India. After months on the road, she tracked down the farmer in the hinterlands and her next film, *Son Rise* (2019), was born.

The Mumbai-based documentary filmmaker recounts: "As I was going from village to village, I felt this eerie absence of girls." Speaking about the farmer and his wife, Bakshi reflects upon a glaring irony: "From this unlikeliest corner, I found my gender-rights heroes. These are ordinary men who are doing the extraordinary to break the shackles of patriarchy."

Besides the national award, the film went on to be selected as part of the UN's global HeForShe movement and won the Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Mumbai International Film Festival. This month, another screening is planned at the ongoing World Expo Dubai's Women's Pavilion (on November 26) to kick off UN Women's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. "There's a very strong power in storytelling," adds the four-time National Film Award winner. "As a filmmaker, I always try to leave my audience sensitised. However burning and urgent the issue is, I will always leave you with hope." >

SPOTLIGHT OF THE YEAR

AMIKA GEORGE

In 2017, this British-Indian teen campaigned for equal education in the UK. Today, she's inspiring young people everywhere to make activism a daily deed, finds **Akanksha Kamath**

When Amika George and I connect over Zoom, we instantly find common ground. "I was taught at school that if you're on your period, you get a tampon, put it up your sleeve and don't show it to anyone," says the 21-year-old activist, echoing a collective experience for women everywhere.

In 2017, when she read that period poverty was a rampant issue in the UK andforced many girls to miss school every month for lack of access to menstrual products, she decided to do something about it.

Her first port of call was Instagram, where her Free Periods movement took off. It gained momentum when a peaceful protest outside Downing Street saw a turnout of 2,000 people including models Suki Waterhouse and Adwoa Aboah. "Social media isn't always a happy or pleasant place to be, but I think activism is definitely its good side," says the history graduate from Cambridge. In January 2020, her big win came when the British government decided to provide schools with free sanitary products.

Bringing menstrual equality by mobilising a movement from her bedroom, George, now honoured with an MBE, hopes to inspire a new league of changemakers with her debut book, *Make It Happen: How To Be An Activist* (HarperCollins). "The word 'activist' has specific connotations of someone who is confident, has radical opinions, or spends their whole life doing one thing. But the world that we live in is different. You see young people integrating activism into their everyday lives. And that's what my book is about—to inspire people to start small."

MOLLIE ROSE; THE HOUSE OF PIXELS

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

SPOTLIGHT OF THE YEAR

MRUNAL THAKUR

Favouring strong scripts over the size of her roles, this 29-year-old rising star is reinventing the role of an ingénue with her genre-bending films, finds **Udita Jhunjhunwala**

Before she got there, Mrunal Thakur couldn't pinpoint Uzbekistan on a world map. But the Mumbai girl found herself in the Uzbeki parliament for the screening of her international film, *Love Sonia* (2018).

For the actor, who switched paths from medicine to media and eventually landed her first acting role in college, *Love Sonia* opened up a new world. "More than my own acting journey, this film was special for its agenda of making viewers aware and alert, and saving girls who are victims of sex trafficking," she says.

If *Love Sonia* gave her a global stage, her Bollywood debut, opposite Hrithik Roshan in *Super 30* (2019), made audiences sit up and take notice. This year, with *Toofaan*, she honed her craft to play the supportive doctor who encourages Aziz's (Farhan Akhtar) boxing career, and worked her way straight into our heart. "I decided that the first few films I'm a part of must have a good script, but that the size of my role would not be so important. After this, I'll be really picky, but for now I want to work with the best filmmakers and understand the craft," she says.

An admirer of versatile actors like Meryl Streep and Ayushmann Khurrana, this 29-year-old aspires to bring the same diversity to her films that her screen heroes exhibit in theirs. And her upcoming filmography seems bent on achieving that—there is the comedy *Aankh Micholi*, a war drama called *Pippa*, and a sport film titled *Jersey*, besides a Telugu film and a thriller called *Thadam*. Watch out for this screen chameleon with a plan. ■

WOMEN *of the* YEAR

CULTURAL ICON OF THE YEAR

BHARTI KHER

Just as she refuses to be defined by her leitmotif of bindis, her wildly inventive art too defies singular interpretation. **Anindita Ghose** speaks to the legendary Indian artist and learns how she's having quite the year of firsts

It took a global pandemic to make Bharti Kher pause. For someone who was "always on a plane and jumping from city to city," COVID-19 compelled a change of pace. Kher tells me that from 2016 to 2019, she was doing up to nine projects a year. A typical itinerary for one of India's most successful contemporary artists would read like this: home in Delhi for 10 days, then New York, back again for a bit, then Zurich, and so on. Today, she is speaking to me over a Zoom call from her home in London, the light from her bedroom window illuminating half her face.

Kher had just installed her solo exhibition *The Unexpected Freedom Of Chaos* at New York's Galerie Perrotin, given a talk at Harvard and flown to Ireland to install her show at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin before the coronavirus struck in 2020. "My opening in Dublin was cancelled and I flew back to London very quickly, but I had already caught it by then. I was in bed for four months," she tells me, adding, "I don't think I've taken a break this long in 22 years."

Yet Kher managed to have a curiously productive year. For one, she rediscovered painting ("One of the only things I could do while being ill was paint"). She put her stamp on the iconic Lady Dior handbag, on invitation from Dior's creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri. And this June, she partnered with her husband, the artist Subodh Gupta, on works for a fundraiser that would go on to raise ₹1 crore for COVID-19 relief. "How do artists recover? We make art. It's also a form of healing for yourself," says Kher, who, last month participated in a charity for the World Wildlife Fund and will exhibit a show at Delhi's Nature Morte this December.

CIRCLE OF LIFE

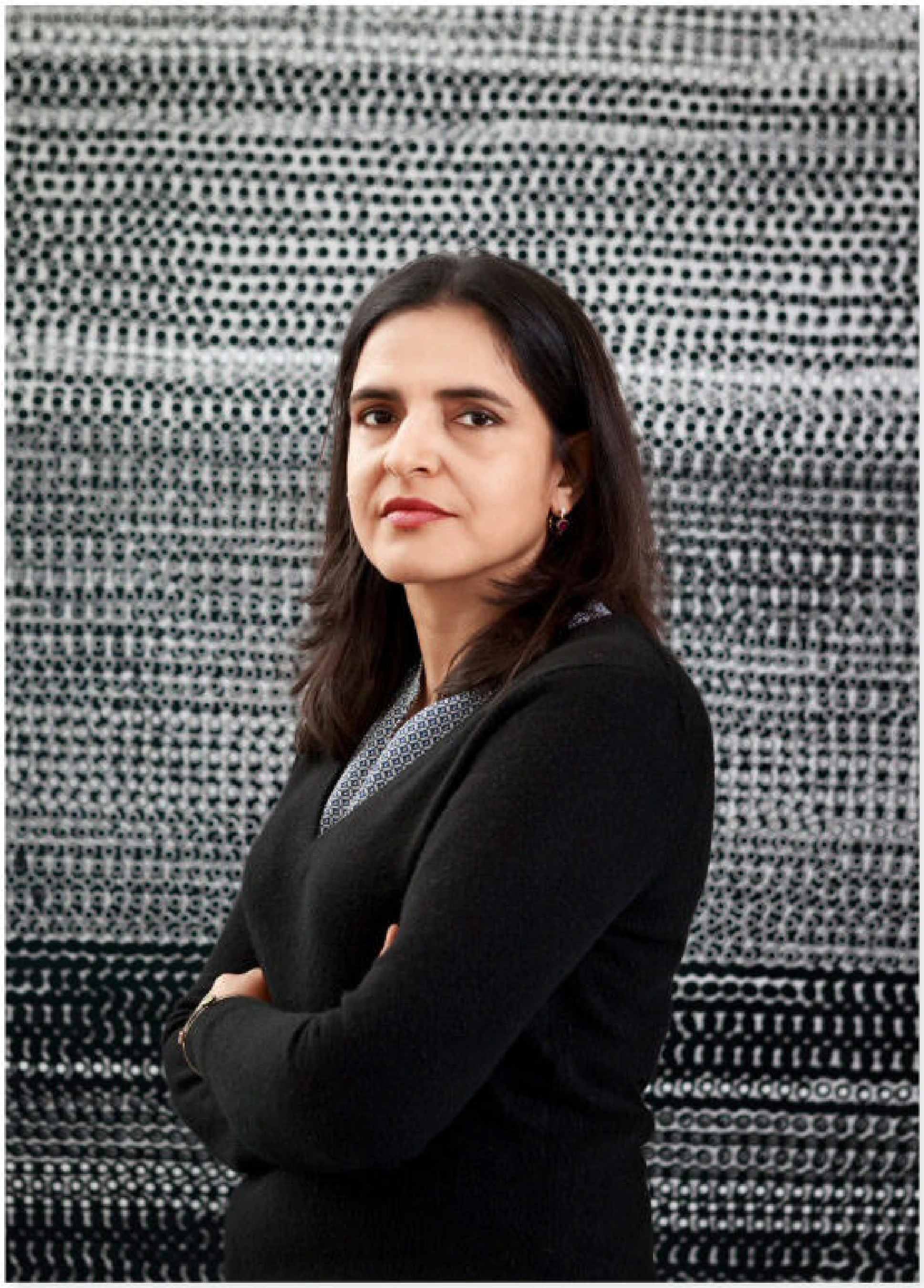
The story of how she landed up in India is art world lore. Born in London to an Indian immigrant family, Kher was 22 and a recent art graduate from Newcastle Polytechnic in Northern England when she tossed a coin to choose between New York and New Delhi. She met her future husband during her first two weeks in India. Now, three decades later, she is firmly entrenched in the Indian cultural landscape.

Kher's career graph started its upward motion in 2006, with her sculpture of a life-sized fibreglass elephant covered in velvety, sperm-shaped bindis. The very next year, she had her first solo exhibition at a major international gallery, New York's Jack Shainman Gallery. That memorable sculpture, *The Skin Speaks A Language Not Its Own* (2006) is one of her most formally striking works. When it fetched US$1.5 million at a Sotheby's auction in 2010, it broke the record for the most expensive sale at auction by a contemporary female artist from India. In the past, Kher told me that it had been inspired by a photograph in the newspaper. But in classic Bharti Kher style, it refuses to submit to any one interpretation. Is it about animal conservation? The status of women in India? Or India itself? Even the bindi, Kher's leitmotif, lends itself to many meanings: femininity, the third eye, linking the spiritual and material worlds, the commodification of fashion... "I think a successful artwork creates universal human experiences, something that can mean different things at different times," she offers. "Your reception of it will be based on who you are and how you feel at that moment. I do tap into certain vulnerabilities."

Her nightstand, visible on the video call, is piled high with books. Kher, a diverse reader, is reading about neuroplasticity these days. I ask how inspired she is by current events. "I'm a political person, but I don't respond to situations as they happen. Art is not knee-jerk. It is more like a slow burn. What we're doing when we make art is we are distilling and condensing. I condense a lot of noise and research into a single moment."

Material leads the way for her, and she has worked with a wide range of materials—from bindis to fibreglass, fabric, resin, metal and mirrors. Her current obsession is painted clay 'golu' goddess dolls used in festive displays across southern India. >

"I'M A POLITICAL PERSON, BUT I DON'T RESPOND TO SITUATIONS AS THEY HAPPEN. ART IS NOT KNEE-JERK. IT IS MORE LIKE A SLOW BURN"



THE ART OF CONTRADICTION

I've always been fascinated by the titles of Kher's works, which send them hurtling to varied directions. Titles like *The Betrayal Of Causes Once Held Dear* (2014-2016) or her 2014 installation at Kochi, *three decimal points. of a minute. of a second. of a degree*, build narrative worlds of their own that linger long after you have experienced the physical work.

Kher has often said that she "break[s] things to know them". Broken mirrors are abundant in her recent shows, as are her *Intermediaries*—the ongoing series of hybrid sculptures she creates with the found 'golu' dolls. Her belief that we are all hybrids is possibly biographical. And Kher's rendition of the Lady Dior bag is also, in a way, a hybrid. "It's two signatures; you join them and you have a hybrid," she told *Vogue* India in an interview in December. "I think almost every single piece that I've ever made carries a degree of contradiction between the form and what it's saying, between beauty and terror or the macabre," reads one of her artist's statements, reminding me of the Early Netherlandish master Hieronymus Bosch. But where her past hybrids had women morphing into animals or superhumans, the *Intermediaries* series is more abstract. Can she draw a line from her half-women to these half-goddesses? "In my practice, there is no chronology. It's more like a musical notation...it sort of swings like arcs that connect to each other through time and space, through ideas," she shares.

SURFACE MATTERS

Another important theme in Kher's practice is the idea of transformation, whether it is the clay dolls that she shatters and puts back together or the saris she sets in resin. "As a sculptor, one of the first questions for me is the idea of transformation. You have this thing and either you name it something else or you push the object to be something else... I want to push a material to its absolute limit or do something that it's not supposed to do," she says. So what does breakage signify to her? "While sculpting, I'm not just playing with space-positive, I'm also playing with space-negative. So when I break things, I'm really opening them up to the possibilities of what they can be," she says, alluding to mythology that has talked about spaces inside objects, like that of the genie inside the lamp.

Kher is interested in creating a synaesthesia of senses. In other words, she is interested in thoroughly confusing you. "When I make art, I make it like a snake who sees with its tongue. Can I change the way that we experience things...can I look at art with my ears, can I hear it, can I smell it?"

Perhaps Kher has a sense of her own posterity. Georgia O'Keeffe, the mother of American modernism, once said: "I found I could say things with colour and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—things I had no words for." Kher too, with her bindi works, has built a vocabulary that allows them to communicate with each other. Most telling of this, perhaps, is her 30-year project *Virus* (2010-2039) that is presented over time for specific exhibitions. The accompanying text, episodic, year-by-year, is part record of events from dates past and projections of those yet to arrive—it includes fact and invention, reflecting a passage of time.

Obviously the word 'virus' has an entirely different meaning now. Is Bharti Kher prescient? Is she tapping into some intuition and premonition that we are wholly unaware of? She laughs. "I imagine that in 10 or 12 years, people won't necessarily associate the idea of the title of the work with Covid... the accompanying text is constantly morphing in the same way that the idea of the virus is constantly changing."

I ask if she ever feels trapped by the bindi leitmotif that often appears to have become bigger than her. While she agrees that artists tend to latch on to certain ideas, she says that's not for her—at 51, she's "still quite young" and there's a lot of time to make new work. "No, I don't feel trapped," she says emphatically. "I love making the bindi works. I created my own language and now I speak it." How many of us can say that? ■

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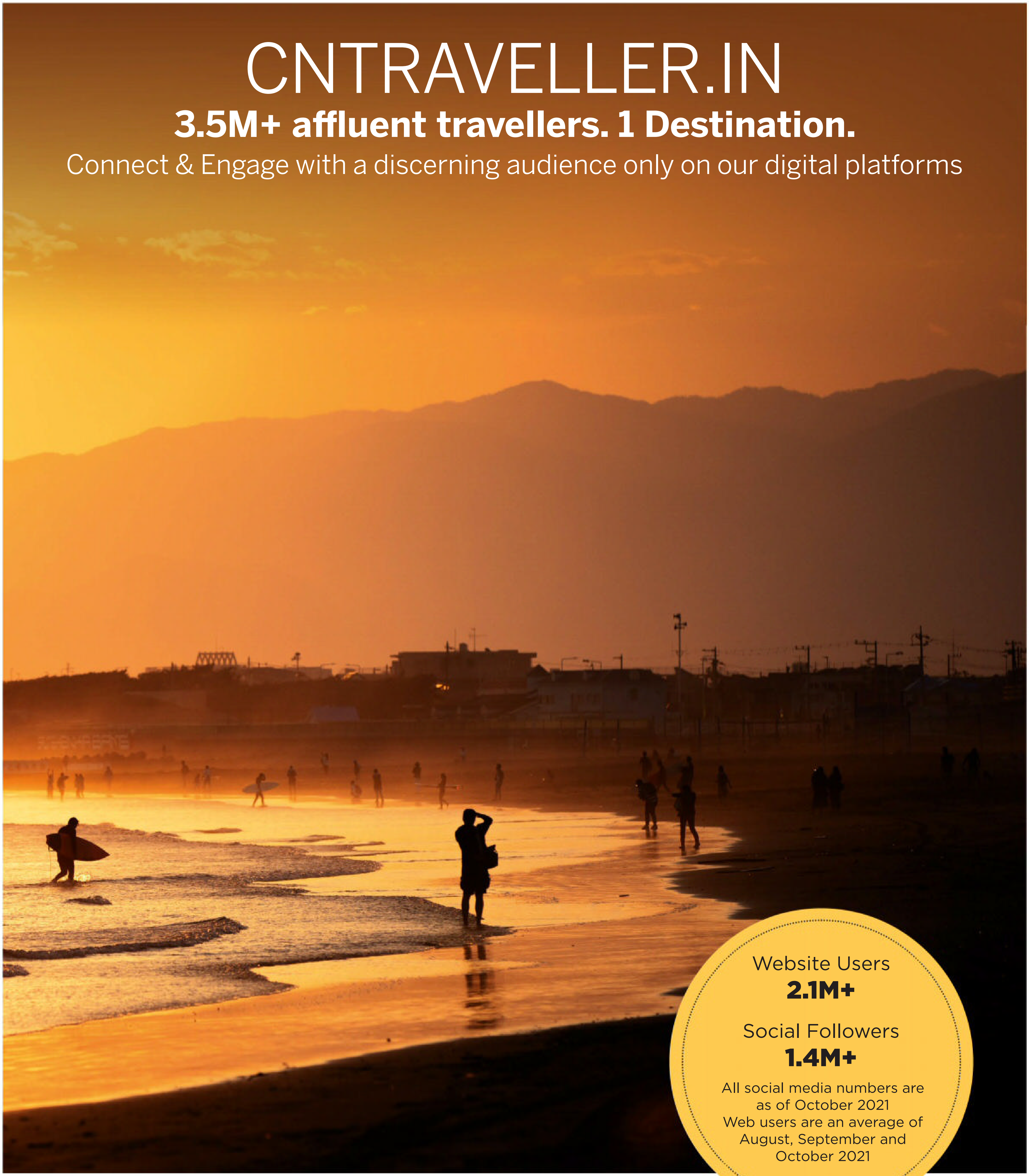

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WOMEN *of the* YEAR

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

JANE GOODALL

After taking the internet by storm with Virtual Jane, the legendary primatologist is ready to bring her hopeful activism and environmental awareness to India, finds **Megha Mahindru**

In every possible way, Jane Goodall is the coolest grandma. Not because she's likely to have the most fantastic stories to tell of the time she spent conducting a pioneering study of chimpanzees in Tanzania as a 26-year-old or the fact that she fronted a cover for *TIME* magazine at the age of 87, but also because the octogenarian has adapted to Zoom life better than most of us. "I don't like 'Granny', it's like a little old lady in a lace cap. To my grandkids, I'm Gaj," shares Goodall, dressed in her signature Patagonia jacket.

Currently in her childhood home in Bournemouth, the English coastal town where her family moved during World War II, Goodall is propped against a shelf crammed with books, tchotchkes from her travels and photos of Flo, Fifi and other friends from the natural world. It's the first time she's stayed put in a place this long.

Pre-pandemic, Goodall would travel 300 days a year, inspiring people to take action against the impending climate crisis. But since borders shut, she took her environmental advocacy to modern means of communication: "Virtual Jane is able to reach millions of people in many more countries than if I'd been on the road. So that's the bright side," says the kind-eyed conservationist. Last December, she launched Hopecast, her Templeton Prize-winning podcast series that features intimate conversations with conservationists. On other days, she is Zooming, vlogging and recording audio books, like she did recently for her recent book, *The Book Of Hope: A Survival Guide For Trying Times* (Penguin Random House) that she co-wrote with Douglas Abrams and Gail Hudson. "Well it's all very strange, but the thing is that I've never been more busy and exhausted in my entire life," she says of the round-the-clock interviews, webinars, panels and conferences. "It's utterly exhausting—my eyes get tired, my voice gets tired from all the talking."

Listeners of Hopecast will agree Goodall's voice is like a balm to 21st-century eco-anxiety. For viewers, the brightness of her eyes as she regales you with stories of the magical natural world can leave you hopeful and eager to make a change. She's the grandmother whose tenacity lies in seizing today for the benefit of tomorrow. She knows that too, and credits the popularity of her latest book to the optimism she brings in these trying times. "That's my mission—to give people hope but also realistically point out that we are facing the terrible twin threats of climate change and loss of biodiversity," she says, speaking softly, but with conviction.

It's with this double-edged intention of reaching more hearts and making people aware of the choices they make every day that she launched the Indian arm of her Jane Goodall Institute in 2018, which officially registered this March. While the institute focuses on habitat conservation projects, poverty-alleviation programmes and animal sanctuaries, its youth arm Roots & Shoots (R&S) is taking environmental stewardship forward through community projects that support people, animals and the planet. "Jane always says that every individual matters, and with R&S, we encourage the youth to become effective stakeholders of the planet and ambassadors for the earth," says Shweta Khare Naik, executive director at the Jane Goodall Institute India, who is leading youth from Sikkim to Chennai to be part of the change. "It's about building this community and consciousness that we need for the future of humanity. With our platform, the youth can discuss the challenges their generation faces and collaborate on actionable goals," adds Naik, who in 2019, mobilised schoolchildren in Darshan Nagar to transform their land into a fertile space bursting with butterflies and birds via their Embrace The Wild programme.

"I always remind people that we are part of the natural world, not separate from it. We actually depend on it for water, air, rain, food—everything," says Goodall, who is a speaker at COP26, the upcoming UN climate conference. Her life's work may have reignited in people a connection with the life around us, but what's the one thing she wishes we could change? "I mean, everything," she says with a laugh. "We need a new definition of success which isn't about wealth and power but about living a good life with enough to support ourselves and our families, and have time to enjoy our families and nature." ■

GETTY IMAGES

WHEN SUSTAINABILITY MEETS FASHION

This festive season, find outfits that are the perfect fusion of style and sustainability with Raishaa's festive collection—Blush. Born in the pandemic, this brand launched by a mother-daughter duo focuses on giving back to the artisanal community of India while also ensuring that each product be environmentally friendly. Their newest collection is a melange of thread and mirror on net with understated pastel colours and exquisite hand stitching. Each creation in this collection is absolutely magical. Have a look at the collection and find pieces that are the perfect fusion of the beautiful Indo-Western style and sustainability.

RAISHAA, Acespace, Raghuvanshi Mills Compound, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400 013

For more information, visit Raishaa.com, call 91 9820505700 or follow @raishaaofficial on Instagram

Back to the 90s

The makeup connoisseur in you knows that nude lipsticks are a necessity in every makeup collection. You know it, Nykaa knows it and Charlotte Tilbury definitely knows it. This is why she's come up with her NEW! Super Breakthrough SUPER NUDES. Think easy to wear, effortlessly glam and nuanced. Available only at Nykaa, this collection brings the famous 90's Super Star nude lipsticks back. Be it for a glam night out or to compliment your office wear, these lipsticks exude an easy confidence that is sure to make you the star of every room.

Available only at Nykaa (online and in select Nykaa luxe stores)

Vogue DIARY

This November, we bring you the best in luxury and fashion

Handcrafted jewellery like no other

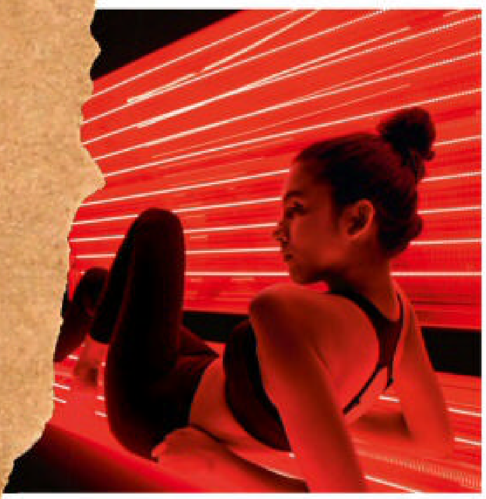
House of jaw dropping statement jewellery, Raniwala 1881 has launched their Autumn/Winter campaign Gharana. With a name that translates to home, at the heart of this collection is an ode to brides who leave their homes behind but take their rich ancestral legacy forward. Through stunning *hathpools*, far-sized *polki* diamonds atop gorgeous chokers, emerald *baju bandhs* and bracelets with *kaleera*, Gharana by Raniwala 1818 is an ode to the principles and legacy of every bride.

For more information, visit Raniwala1881.com or follow @raniwala1881 on Instagram and Facebook

IT'S TIME FOR THE ULTIMATE WATCH

Swiss haute horology manufacturer Audemars Piguet has yet again pushed the envelope with their newest iteration of Royal Oak Double Balance Wheel Paved With Diamonds and set in 18 carat pink gold. The two aspects compliment each other perfectly with the radiance of the diamonds highlighting the intricate dial. This combination of haute horlogerie and haute joaillerie is a dream come true for watch and jewellery enthusiasts both. Set with 436 baguette cut diamonds and showcasing the expert craftsmanship with openworked mechanism, this watch is an 18-carat statement piece that your wardrobe absolutely needs.

For more information, follow @audemarspiguet on Instagram and Facebook



SELF-CARE IS THE BEST CARE

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that our health is of utmost priority. Catering to beauty, wellness, health, pain and recovery concerns, Potenza Advanced Wellness clinic ensures holistic wellbeing with advanced medical protocols. They are one of the first Indian clinics to introduce CryoTherapy, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy or Photo-Biomodulation Bed Therapy and Laser Therapy! With specializations in anti-aging, wound healing, injury recovery and more you can say goodbye to all the things that have been plaguing you!

For more information visit, potenzawellness.com, call 9310168669, 01141086333 or follow @potenzawellness on Instagram

Diamonds and platinum are a girl's best friend

If you're looking for a jewellery piece that compliments the best aspects of your personality — your resilience, optimism and poise, Platinum Evara has got you covered with their collection of platinum bracelets. These beautiful accessories are crafted with diamond studded bands in platinum sitting atop another in rose gold. This unique blend of diamond and dual tones of platinum is symbolic of how people carry unique blends of resilience and beauty within themselves. A testament of growth, strength and grace, these Platinum Evara bracelets are a reflection of the unbreakable spirit of the women who wear them.

For more information visit www.Ptevara or follow @PlatinumEvara on Instagram

A WHOLE LOTTA SHOES

It's often said that you can conquer the world with the perfect pair of shoes. No one knows that better than Venus Steps. So if youre looking for the perfect pair to make a statement, Venus Steps is the one stop location for you From red carpet events to office wear. Venus Steps has shoes that are available for every possible occasion in mynad styles and colours. Make the dreams of the fashionista in you come true with the arnazing shoe collections at Venus Steps They will hep you put your best step forward Literally.

For more information, visit Venussteps.com

Fashion for all

This winter turn the heat up a notch or two with Camla's specially designed clothing for the colder months. This unisex fashion brand makes the best urban street style offerings for everyone. Defined as fun, hip and super stylish, their collections are all things modern, fashionable and suitable for all budgets. With timeless pieces for both men and women, the use of the most comfortable fabrics and a visibly killer style, Camla is the place you need to go for the best wardrobe assets.

For more information, visit Glamly.com

HERSHEY'S
EXOTIC DARK
CALIFORNIAN ALMONDS
SEASONED WITH GUAVA & MEXICAN CHILI FLAVOR
HERSHEY'S
EXOTIC DARK
CALIFORNIAN ALMONDS
SPRINKLED WITH BLACKBERRY

Life is like a box of chocolates

If there's one thing that always makes everything infinitely better, it's chocolate. No one knows that better than Hershey's—a fact they further prove with their newest addition in the range of Hershey's Exotic Dark' chocolates. Say hello to two brand new delicious dark cocoa rich chocolate variants—Hershey's Exotic Dark deliciously crafted with an intriguing combination of smooth, dark cocoa rich chocolate with exotic Blackberry granules dusted on Roasted California Almond. The second variant is a combination of smooth dark cocoa rich chocolate with roasted California Almond seasoned with Guava and Mexican Chilli. Bringing a unique fusion of flavours to the table, Hershey's is less an indulgence and more a definite necessity: Everyone needs delectable chocolates in their lives and with 'Hershey's Exotic Dark', you have exactly that!

For more information, visit https://www.amazon.in/stores/page/7C04B4E2-9E72-4792-9410-18EC7D845B35?ingress=0&visitId=2afeb6f1-57c3-4d80-8102-3ce8b670580c

THE MAKEUP MAGICIAN

Your wedding day is one of the most important days of your life and obviously you want to look and feel your best. If you are looking for a professional to help you dress up for the most important day of your life, look no further than Samaira Sandhu. Known as one of the best bridal makeup artists in the country, Sandhu has trained in Berlin and has over 12 years of industry experience and a portfolio boasting brands such as M.A.C. Cosmetics and Lancôme. With an impressive resume of brands in her reportiere, it's no wonder that her incredible makeup services are much in demand by brides.

For more information, visit SamairaSandhu.com or follow @samairasandhu on Instagram

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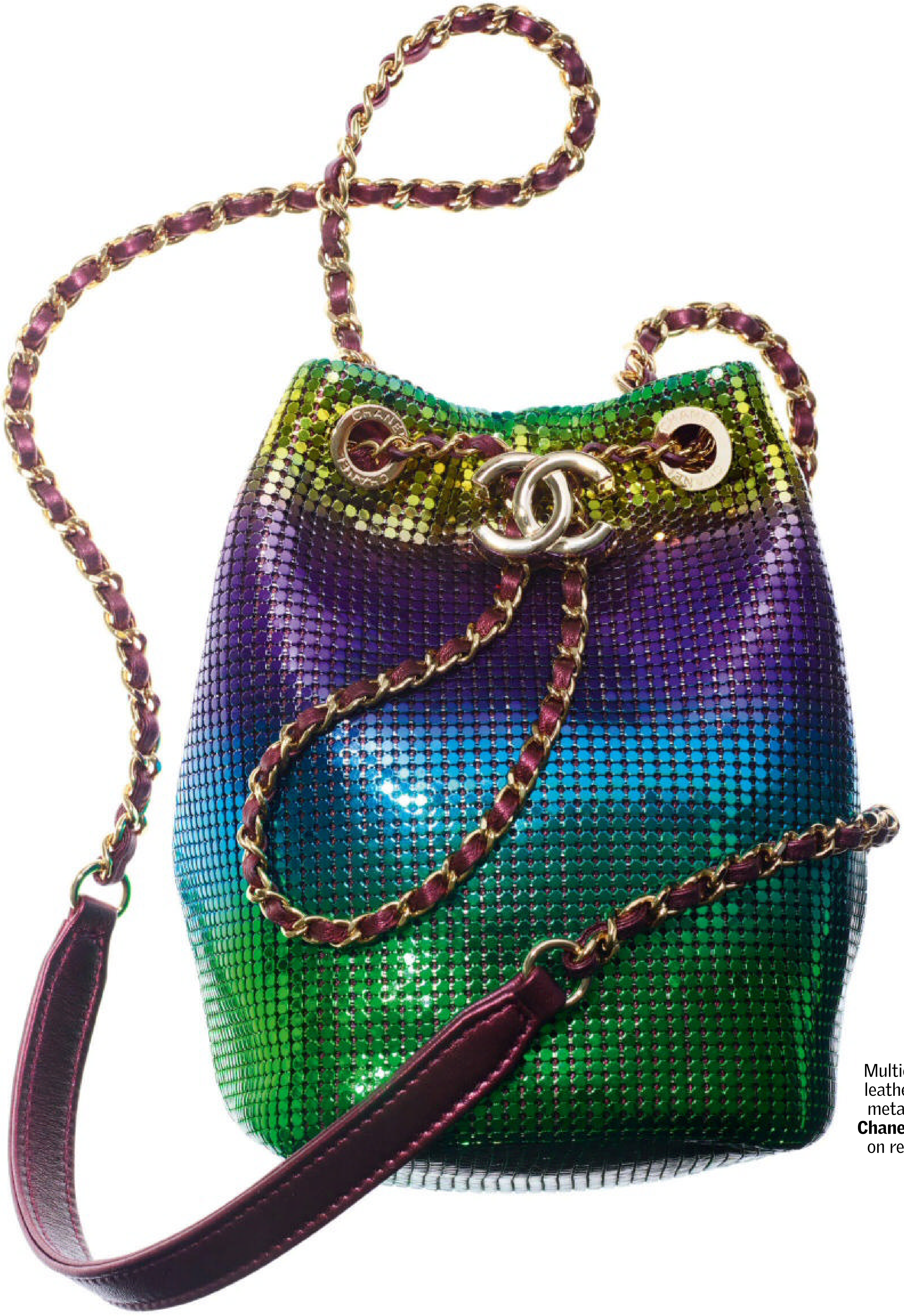

Multicolour leather and metal bag, **Chanel**, price on request

Boogie nights

Here's why Chanel's multihued mini bucket bag is giving us all the feels. After nearly two years of staying at home, we're all craving an old-fashioned night out. You know the kind—dressed in a slinky, cocktail-ready look, surrounded by friends and strangers, dancing till dawn. And this haute new accessory, a mini version of the bucket bag in which to hold everything you need from dusk till dawn, brings together all our favourite elements: a '90s-nightclub-style electro-hued mesh, the always-cool iconic Chanel logo, and a quilted strap to be slung across the shoulder to keep your hands free. Because especially now, our nights and our days call for unabashed glamour.

— Priyanka Khanna

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